

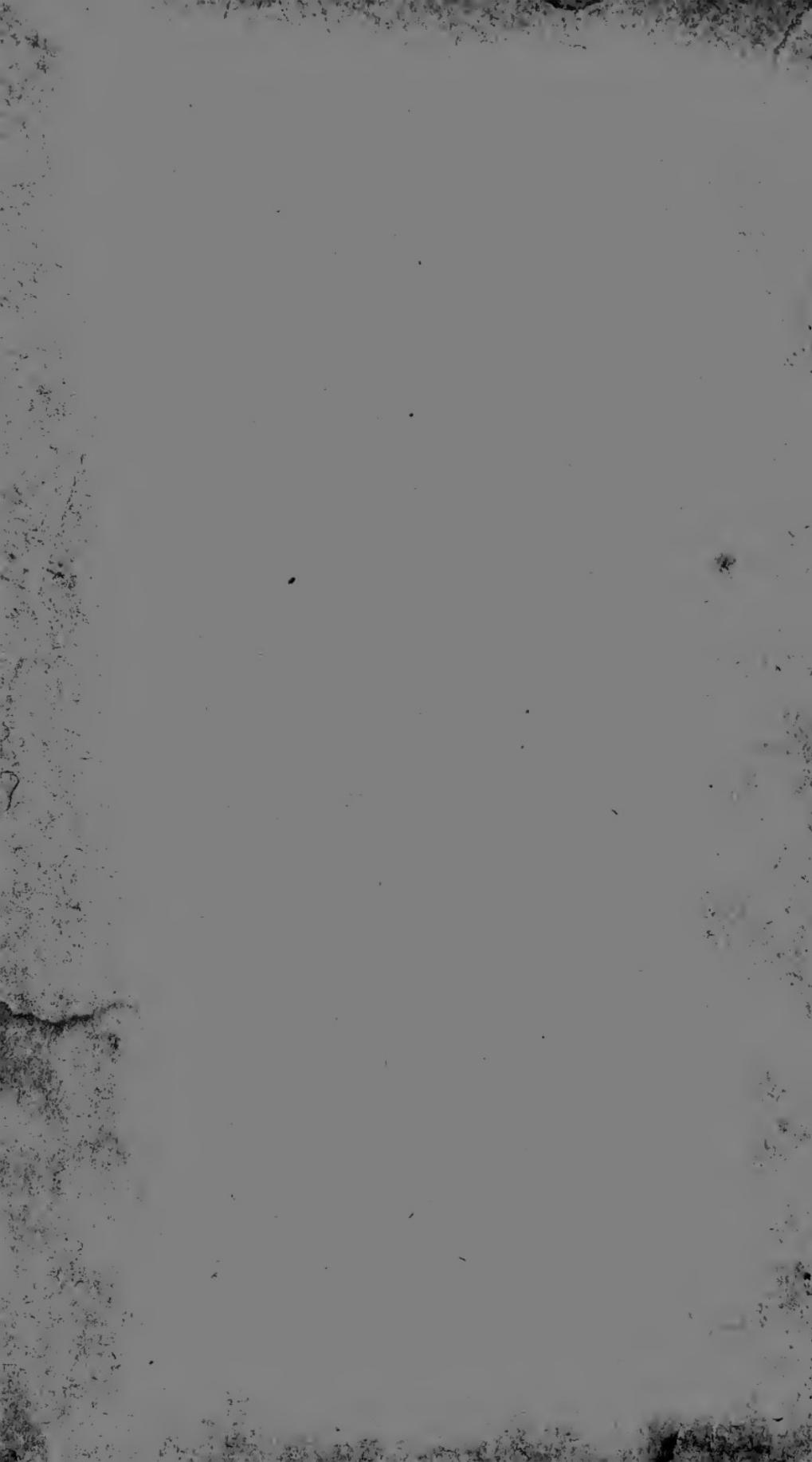




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THE

# REFORMER REFORMED:

OR A SECOND PART OF THE

## ERRORS OF HOPKINSIANISM

DETECTED AND REFUTED:

BEING AN EXAMINATION OF MR. SETH WILLISTON'S  
“VINDICATION OF SOME OF THE MOST ESSENTIAL  
DOCTRINES OF THE REFORMATION.”

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BY NATHAN BANGS,  
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

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“When reason is against a man, a man will be against reason.” *Dr. Reid.*

“Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations!” *Jeremiah viii. 9, 10, 11.*

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SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW-YORK, ss.

{ L.S. } BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the seventh day of August, in the forty-third year of the Independence of the United States of America, Nathan Bangs, of the said District, has deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as Author, in the words and figures following, to wit:

"The Reformer Reformed: or a second part of the Errors of Hopkinsianism detected and refuted: being an examination of Mr. Seth Williston's "Vindication of some of the most essential doctrines of the reformation." By Nathan Bangs, minister of the gospel.

"When reason is against a man, a man will be against reason."—Dr. Reid.

"Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?"—Jeremiah viii. 9, 10, 11."

In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled "An Act for the encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned." And also to an Act, entitled "an Act, supplementary to an Act, entitled an Act for the encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned, and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints."

JAMES DILL, Clerk of the Southern District of New-York.

Exchanged  
7/18/13

## PREFACE.

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CUSTOM has established the propriety of assigning reasons for presenting publications to the world.

The sermons of Mr. Williston were considered a direct assault upon our doctrines; and to repel that assault, the Errors of Hopkinsianism was written and published. Although a commencement in this controversy on our part, might be considered a needless intrusion upon the public attention; yet, we think that defending ourselves when assailed, is perfectly justifiable. Who will say we ought silently to look on while our antagonists are wielding the sword of controversy over our heads? This consideration then, of acting on the defensive, is offered as an apology, if an apology for defending the truth be necessary, for continuing this polemical discussion.

Though excited simply from a sense of duty to publish the Errors of Hopkinsianism, in doing it, the author felt all that fear and diffidence, which the importance of the subject, a consciousness of his inability to do it justice, and the prospect of exposing himself, under many disadvantages to the eye of a criticising world, were calculated to impress. The favourable reception however which that little performance met with by the kind partiality of friends, and the inward satisfaction resulting from a conviction of having acted under the influence of an honest desire to promote the cause of divine truth, amply compensate for any disagreeable sensations growing out of the circumstances of the case, and afford no small consolation and support. For, notwithstanding the many imperfections of that work, it met with a sale quite beyond expectation, and was treated with greater kindness than was anticipated. Some, to be sure, have handled it rough enough; for, if report may be relied on, a certain clerical gentleman, was instrumental in committing some copies of it to the flames. An honourable end!

But Mr. Williston has published a professed reply to that book; and, I am sorry to say, he has manifested less impartiality in the statement of our doctrines, and in his manner of defending his own, than he did in his sermons. To correct his

erroneous statements, to defend the truth against the onsets of error, and to detect the fallacy of his arguments, with a view to promote the honour and glory of God, whose sacred character appears so completely shrouded in darkness by the sentiments of our antagonists, have been the leading objects which have drawn forth the following work. It is hoped that the like inaccuracies, which, notwithstanding all the care that was taken, appeared in the former publication, may be avoided in this.

But, being more and more convinced of a liability to mistake, the reader's indulgence is begged for any he may discover, and he is requested to let them find an apology in that common frailty of human nature, the *fallibility of human judgment*. But while mercy is asked for the *manner* in which the present work is executed, none is sought for the *doctrines* stated and illustrated. If they can be slain by scriptural and rational argument, let them die under its lacerating strokes. The reputation of an obscure individual, or the character of any particular sect, however numerous and respectable, are considerations of small importance, when compared to the developement, and the permanent establishment of the tremendous truths of God. With a direct view to promote experimental and practical godliness, these truths should be the supreme object of every man's pursuit. If any inferior object had induced the author to intrude himself upon the public attention, and especially to disturb the tranquilizing waters of the Christian world at the present time, with the pen of controversy, he would merit the severest censure.

It may, however, be objected, that the prevailing disposition among the several orders of professing Christians to unite in the grand work of spreading the gospel, ought to preclude all controversies of this kind. So far, indeed, as this disposition is founded in *Divine love* and *Christian harmony*, it should be cherished by every possible means. Were the several denominations of Christians, to agree in laying aside, in respect to contending for them, each their *peculiarities*, and unite in recommending to the lost world the grand fundamentals of Christianity, it would be a most desirable event. But the time has not yet arrived for such a union to take place; although it is apparent that much of that bigotted claim to exclusive discipleship is declining. The mere accession, however, of nominal

converts to the Christian cause, only tends to diminish the peculiar glories of the Christian character. But can our antagonists, who cordially approve of Mr. W's book, in which he stigmatizes us with the opprobrious epithet of *Satan's ministers*, be sincerely desirous of uniting with us? Do they want to range under the banners of Christ, the *minions* of the black prince of darkness! Let none talk of union with us, who reiterate this smoky calumny with so much Christian gravity.

Or do they expect us to submit in silence, while they are flaying us alive with such unmerciful strokes? However gratifying it might be to them to have the undisturbed privilege of assailing us in this rude manner, calling us 'The seed of the serpent spitting out all our venom,'\* let them not mock us by pretending it is to persuade us to union. We are not to be thus cajoled out of our religious principles. Does one dominant party vociferate *union*? for the purpose of making all others subservient to its monopolizing designs? It is devoutly to be wished that none are actuated by such unworthy motives.

Deprecating this evil, as one of the worst of human evils, it may be observed, that, so far as a true gospel union is sought, the present author would be the last to put the smallest barrier in the way of its attainment. Let those who so loudly plead for union, come forward in the spirit of brotherly love, and, by sacrificing their *peculiar* sentiments, agree with their brethren in preaching the grand fundamental doctrines of the gospel; and the author, for one, promises to meet them upon this ground, and to unite in extending the influence of divine truth.

Until the period arrives for such a union to take place, we must be permitted to defend ourselves against the invasive assaults of our theological adversaries; feeling perfectly satisfied that our doctrines should be tested by the closest investigation. Though dissident of our own strength, yet we are so confident that we have truth on our side, that we doubt not but it will support and defend us.

Under this impression the following pages have been written. To answer every objection which may have been raised, was impossible without extending the work too far. The principal features, however, of Mr. Williston's doctrine, and the princi-

\*See the Rev. Mr. Spring's sermon on *Election*, p. 39.

pal arguments employed in its defence have been considered. It is probable that some of the strictures may seem severe. They appear so, indeed, to the author; but he knew not how to avoid them. Some of Mr. W.'s assertions were apparently so opposite to truth, that it was found extremely difficult to reply to them, and still preserve the appearance of christian meekness and moderation. The author has however, chosen the softest terms he could to convey his meaning. If he has been betrayed into the use of any which the occasion cannot justify, he humbly asks pardon of God, and of all good men. May God send his blessing with this imperfect attempt to illustrate and defend His sacred truth.

N. BANGS.

New-York, July 20th. 1818.

N. B. That the reader might readily distinguish between quotations from Mr. W.'s book, and those from other authors, the latter are distinguished by *single*, and the former by *double* commas.

## INTRODUCTION.

It may be necessary to inform the reader, that in the year 1810, while travelling on the Albany circuit, circumstances occurred which induced the author to engage in a public debate with the Rev. Mr. Benedict, Presbyterian minister in Franklin, Delaware County, on the points of doctrine now under consideration. This debate was conducted in the Presbyterian meeting-house, in Durham, of which congregation Mr. Seth Williston is the officiating minister. Being present at the debate, and doubtless feeling a lively interest in its final result, he afterwards published his volume of Sermons, in which he attempted a vindication of the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism and Hopkinsianism; in doing which he also attempted a refutation of some of the doctrines taught by the Methodists. Viewing some of the sentiments of Mr. Williston, not only erroneous in themselves, but as having a pernicious tendency; and also conceiving our doctrines not fairly exhibited by Mr. W. I felt myself under obligation to attempt a detection of what was considered heterodox in his sermons; and for the sake of giving the public a just perception of our sentiments, to rectify some of his mis-

takes. This was done in six letters addressed to that gentleman, entitled the “Errors of Hopkinsianism detected and refuted.” He has published a reply to my book, which he calls a “Vindication of some of the most essential doctrines of the reformation.” As he has produced some scriptures which were not before noticed, and advanced some arguments, not before considered; and as the subjects appear very important in themselves, taking them all into the account; it is thought necessary for the vindication of the truth to attempt a second refutation of the errors of Hopkinsianism.

THE  
REFORMER REFORMED.

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CHAPTER I.

*On universal divine agency and efficiency.*

MR. WILLISTON'S first section is entitled, "A vindication of the doctrine of divine decrees; being a reply to objections raised against this doctrine in Mr. Bangs' first letter." This title has a very imposing aspect. His readers must certainly infer that we deny the doctrine of *divine* decrees, whereas we as fully believe them, as he can. Perhaps, however, this title was only designed to pre-engage the reader in favour of the arguments which were to follow. But the question between us is, *What are divine decrees?* He maintains that they comprehend every thing that ever did, or ever will take place, in heaven, earth, or hell: that all these things are not only decreed, and are according to God's will and pleasure, but are actually brought into existence by God himself. This proposition we deny. And that the reader may be able to decide on which side of the question the truth lies, I shall endeavour,

1. To explain those scriptures which are generally brought in support of that proposition.
2. To reply to some of Mr. Williston's arguments with which he has attempted its vindication.
3. To attempt its refutation by scripture and rational argument. But O my God, who is sufficient for these things! Touch thou my heart with celes-

tial fire, that it may glow with an ardent love for the truth. Enlighten thou my understanding, that to the "height of this great argument, I may assert a gracious providence, and justify the ways of God to man." May the irradiating beams of eternal truth so shine into my soul that, loosing sight of self, and my antagonist as a man, I may perceive the superlative excellence of divine truth, and follow its attractive charms wherever it may lead.

1. And first, let us attend to those passages of scripture which have been adduced to prove that God excites man to moral evil. That we may have a clear understanding of them, it is important to notice the relation in which God is represented as standing to man. He is not only represented in the character of Creator, Legislator, Governor and Father, but also as a *Judge*, and as being in some sense the executor of his own decrees.\* This is especially the case in respect to his conduct towards nations, and the nation of Israel in particular. As they had been selected from the other nations of the world to be his covenant people, he is represented as presiding over them as their *Governor*, and as ruling over them as their *King*, and as deciding upon their moral conduct as their *Judge*. But this sovereign authority was not restricted to the Israelites. As nations cannot be judged, rewarded and punished in

\* By the *decrees of God* in this connexion, we understand his just and immutable purpose in so overruling the conduct of his obedient and disobedient people, by limiting, restraining, and directing its final result, so far as is consistent with man's freedom and responsibility, as to make it serve for the development of his own most glorious character, and the good of those who love him. So far as our opponents in this controversy, contend for the operation of divine decrees in thus overruling mankind, even the designs and dispositions of the wicked, we entirely agree with them: but when they insist, as Mr. W. has done, that God works efficiently upon the human heart for the production of evil desires, wicked designs, and furnishes men with means to execute their nefarious purposes, we beg leave to dissent from them, for the reasons assigned in this chapter.

the future world in their national capacity, God exercises his executive authority over them in this world; using for this purpose one wicked nation as an instrument of his vengeance upon another. But how strange would it be, to infer from these facts, that God by force of his decree, *made* these people wicked, that he might have an opportunity of displaying his sovereignty in their punishment. This erroneous representation of the divine character and conduct, is exposed in my first letter to Mr. W. p. 19.

Considering God in his executive capacity, as deciding upon the character and conduct of nations, and as executing upon them his own decrees as a punishment for their wickedness, we may have an easy and rational interpretation of those scriptures which speak of his employing them as instruments of his holy indignation against those nations which had provoked him to anger by their unnecessitated rebellions. ‘But Sihon, king of Heshbon, would not let us pass by him; for the Lord thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into thy hand, as appeareth this day.’ Deut. ii. 30. It is apparent from a parallel narrative of this event in Numb. xxi. 21—30, that the reason why the Lord hardened the spirit of that king was, on account of his former wickedness; for which God now designed to destroy him by the instrumentality of the Israelites, who acted, in this instance, as the scourge of God. We may also behold in this transaction, a just reaction of divine providence, in thus punishing this wicked prince, who had, at a former period, made unjust depredations upon a neighbouring nation, the Moabites, and dispossessed them of their cities and lands: and now, to punish him for his predatory warfare, *Sihon* is dispossessed of *his* cities and lands by the *Israelites*. An awful lesson to those proud and

haughty nations, whose venality prompts them to plunder others, merely because they have power to do so. In the same way, and for the same reasons, did God commission *Joshua* to exterminate the devoted nations who inhabited the land of Canaan. The cup of *their iniquities was now full*, the whole land was polluted by their *abominations*, and therefore God determined to purify the land, by destroying its wicked inhabitants by fire and sword. But what a dark shade would be cast upon the character of the *Holy One of Israel*, to infer from these circumstances, that he first *decreed*, and then *excited* by his own agency those nations to commit all their abominations; and that these abominations were perfectly pleasing to him; and that he nevertheless punished them in this exemplary manner, for having fulfilled his decree, and for having done his pleasure! Similar conduct manifesting itself in any *man* would stamp his character with everlasting infamy. First *make* them *sinful*; and then *punish* them for *being so!* Alas, that ever such a representation should have been given of God's most sacred, just and merciful character. It is enough to make one's blood chill even to think of it. Deliberately to assert it, and gravely to attempt to prove it, appears to us, to the last degree shocking and blasphemous.

'O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit, he meaneth not so; neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few.' Isa. x. 5—7. In this instance also, the Lord manifests his character as a righteous King, who is about to execute his indignation upon

the *hypocritical* nation of Israel ; and finding the Assyrian monarch a fit instrument to execute his purpose, he uses him for that end. Hence in ver. 15. he is compared to the axe and saw in the hands of the carpenter, whom God used to hew and sever the Israelites for their wickedness against him.-- But in what a contemptible light would he appear, were we to suppose that he decreed and excited the Israelites to their hypocrisy and also the Assyrian to his wickedness ; and then sent the latter to punish the former for their sins ! Let those believe this who can.

Mr. Williston has a good remark upon this circumstance, were it not that it contradicts his leading principle, it would answer him a good purpose. "The action of going to Jerusalem to do mischief, and to seek plunder, was exclusively the action of this ambitious monarch ; but his going there as a rod is ascribed to the God of Israel." p. 32. This certainly is a necessary distinction. But how does it coincide with his doctrine ? This text he brings to prove that *all* things are brought about by God's agency : and if *all* things are brought to pass by his agency, were not the *action* and *motive* of going to Jerusalem to do mischief and to seek plunder, included among the *all things* ? Or were this motive and this action, *no thing* ? no event, no effect ? If Mr. Williston's doctrine be true, the design and action of the Assyrian monarch, were as much decreed, and as much according to God's pleasure, as was his going there as his *rod*, the *staff of his indignation*. If, however, Mr. W. design to make this exception, he thereby gives up his doctrine of universal divine agency and efficiency.

Now, if the motive and disposition of this king were decreed, and brought into existence and operation by the exciting agency of God, how could he have been any more responsible for them, than the

axe or saw in the hands of the carpenter? These are the insuperable difficulties attendant on Mr. Williston's principle of interpretation: all which are completely obviated by admitting that this king, by an abuse of his moral power, uninfluenced to do it by divine agency, *made himself wicked*; and that the people of Israel also, abusing their high privileges unnecessarily, had merited this chastisement; to inflict which God now employed the Assyrian monarch, as a scourge in his holy hand; and then, to punish him for his wilful and unnecessary wickedness, for his lofty pretensions, *the Lord of hosts shall stir up a scourge for him according to the strength of Midian at the rock of Oreb.* See Isa. x. 5—24. This view of the subject exhibits a righteous King in the *Lord of hosts*, setting in judgment on these two hypocritical nations, passing sentence of condemnation upon them for their evil conduct, and finally executing his just decision by such means as his infinite wisdom and goodness saw fit to employ for that purpose.

That text in Rev. xvii. 17. 'For God hath put it into their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God be fulfilled,' admits of a similar interpretation. It is no part of the present enquiry, who is meant by the *beast*. It is more important, to remark, for the vindication of God's sacred honor, that these kingdoms, having become wicked by an abuse of their free moral agency, to punish them for it, God put it into their hearts, to give *their kingdom to the beast to fulfil his will.* When nations become opulent and proud, they generally become luxurious; this paves the way for effeminacy, which renders them, not only objects of divine indignation on account of their accumulated guilt, but also an easy prey to their enemies: and now having forfeited the protection of God by their wickedness

and falling into the hands of their enemies ; the Lord is said to deliver them up, and to employ their depredating enemies as the rod of his indignation to punish a *disobedient and gainsaying people.*

In all these, and many more similar instances in which God is represented as hardening the hearts of kings, and as using them as instruments of his indignation, we may behold a righteous sovereign, exemplifying his distributive justice in the punishment of nations, (and also those individuals whose elevated stations in society rendered it necessary to punish them in this exemplary manner,) for their wilful aberrations from the laws of eternal truth and righteousness. A human judge, acting in his official capacity, pronounces sentence of death upon a murderer ; and the law orders him executed by some person appointed for that purpose : This is a righteous act ; and it is in no sense inconsistent with that law which enjoins us to love our neighbour as ourselves. But to say that this judge, (supposing him to have had power to do so) forced this man to murder by a decree or otherwise ; and then punished him for so doing, would be the foulest impeachment of his character. And it would be equally ungenerous to say, he influenced the man to commit the horrid sin of murder, merely because he executed the law upon the murderer. So it is altogether improper to say that the Judge of all the earth, excited and influenced those wicked nations to be guilty of moral evil, merely because he exercised his judicial authority upon them, for *being so.* God will finally sit in judgment upon the incorrigibly wicked, and consign them to the region of eternal misery, for having abused their distinguished privileges ; but must we infer from this fact, that he *foreordained* that they *should be wicked*, and that he, by his own agency, influenced them

to sin, that he might have an opportunity of punishing them with hell fire ? The thought is too shocking to be indulged for a moment. But we might, with as much propriety, infer this, as to conclude that because God in some instances has judicially hardened wicked monarchs, and employed them as ministers of his righteous vengeance upon others, who made themselves objects of his displeasure by their reiterated crimes, that he also influenced them to commit those crimes. If the reader will make use of the above principle, he will, it is believed, have a key that will open all the locks which calvinistic decrees have invented, to shut up the wards which guard the temple of truth. He may then pass safely along, without being frightened with the view of a being who has bolted all the doors of mercy against Hopkinsian reprobates, by the polished steel of a *moral inability* : and who threatens them with everlasting destruction for not doing an *impossibility*.

The principle of interpretation above laid down will obviate the difficulty suggested by Mr. Williston respecting what he calls my concession, in admitting that God *sends* the *sword*, to punish cities and kingdoms devoted, in consequence of their wickedness, to destruction. Upon this he observes, p. 44, "I also conclude, that if it does not appear inconsistent that God should *send* a man to break his commandments, (as the wicked Sennacherib evidently did) it will not appear inconsistent that he should *purpose* to send him." Here, and indeed in all he has said in this and the following page to reconcile his doctrine, which asserts that the purposes and commands of God are opposed to each other, and to common sense, he takes for granted, that when God uses one wicked nation to punish another wicked nation, that he sends them to *break* his commandments. But when a murder-

er is executed, is the law violated? Does the man who executes its penalty, violate, by that act, its precepts? Nay, does not the judge who pronounces sentence, and the man who sees it executed, obey the law as much as those who avoid murder? And if they refused to decide and execute, would not they themselves be as much violators of law, as the man who commits murder? God's righteous law passes sentence of condemnation upon those who violate its precepts; and, as before observed, as nations cannot consistently be judged in a future state, in their national capacity, God is represented as sitting in judgment on them in this world: and, in the execution of his righteous sentence, he employs those agents, whom he seeth fit to choose; but in executing this righteous decision, do they violate God's commands? or, does he *send* them to *break* his commandments? Certainly not. His command is, *He that sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed*, Gen. ix. 6. His commands, or his *revealed will*, require that those nations who have *filled up the measure of their iniquities*, should be destroyed; and the instruments of his *justice*, who are sent to execute his *righteous decrees* upon such devoted nations, are executing his *commandments*; that is, they are, in obedience to the immutable law of heaven's high court of justice, fulfilling the unalterable counsel of God: for so runs this counsel—'Those mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.' There is then no kind of opposition between this counsel of eternal wisdom and justice, and God's commandments, which require us to love one another. Are we to suppose that those angels, who, in the final day of decision, execute the righteous sentence of the judge of all the earth, by so doing "break the commandments of God? Neither do those ministers of God's inflex-

ible justice, who are sent to punish nations justly devoted to destruction for their wickedness, break his commandments. They are executing their awful penalty, in obedience to God's revealed decrees. What a tottering system must that be, which forces its advocates, in attempting its vindication, to set the *decrees* and *commands*, the *purposes* and *will* of God at variance! Which represents God as *decreeing*, and *bringing to pass* what he has *forbidden*, and *prohibited* by an express *command*. We sincerely pity the man, who, to defend his doctrine, is driven to such a desperate assault upon the *consistency* of God's sacred character and government.

From p. 37—48 of my book, I undertook so to explain those passages of sacred scripture which speak of the crucifixion of Christ, as to make them harmonize with the uniform design of revelation, which is to vindicate God from being the author of sin: and also to rescue them from the improper service into which they have been pressed, when employed to prove that God decreed, and, by his own agency, influenced the Jews in their inhuman and murderous conduct towards our divine Saviour.

Mr. Williston has professed to reply to my arguments on that subject. I do not wish to repeat what has been already said, and therefore refer the reader to the abovementioned pages of my book, and to what Mr. W. has said in reply. See p. p. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16. of his book. It is proper, however, to remark, that he has taken an easy leap over the strength of my arguments upon that subject, and left the most pointed scriptures untouched.\* So

\* In respect to Luke xxii. 22. Mr. W. has noticed the error in the criticism on the Greek word Ω<sub>μ</sub>ρινον. But although that participle is in the passive voice, preterite, it by no means affects the argument in favour of referring the determination there spoken of to Judas and the Sanhedrim; for we may read

far therefore, I consider the arguments good, and unanswerable.

it thus, *Truly the Son of Man goeth as it hath been determined.* While therefore I acknowledge an unintentional mistake, (and which was discovered very soon after my book was printed, but too late to correct it,) I still think there is no necessity of supposing the determiner in that particular case, was God. The whole context forbids such a conclusion.

In regard to Acts iv. 27, 28. I am fully convinced that the translation given of that text in my book is correct. That we are not *alone* in this sentiment, is evident from the following French translation :—Car en effet Hérode et Ponce Pilate, avec les Gentils et le peuple d'Israël, se sont assemblés contre ton saint Fils Jésus, que tu as oint, Pour faire toutes les choses que ta main et ton conseil avoient auparavant déterminé devoir être faites ; of which the following is an accurate translation—For in effect (or in truth) Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, assembled themselves against thy holy Son Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, To do the things which thy hand and counsel had before determined should be done. Here the nominative to the verb *to do* is *Thy Holy Son Jesus*—who was *anointed* of God the Father *to do* all the things, the *miracles* and *works* which he performed. See the French Bible, printed by the *New York Bible Society*. When I quoted the French version of Acts xiii. 43. I did not think it necessary to inform my readers “that the New Testament was not first written in the French language,” because I did not suppose any one believed it was : Mr. W. however, has done this for me ; and therefore it is needless to remind the reader that the above quotation in French dress is not designed for the original : it is only intended to shew that we are not singular in contending for that translation of the original Greek. Those who understand French will do me the justice to acknowledge, that I have not misrepresented that version of the text.

Mr. W. indeed says, in support of his application of this text, that in the second Psalm, from which the Apostle quoted, “it is foretold what would be *done to* or against Jesus, and not what he would *himself do.*” That he is under a mistake will be evident to all who consult and compare the passages. After predicting what the wicked would do *against Christ*, the Lord’s *anointed*, ver. 1—3. the inspired Psalmist then foretels what the Lord *himself would do.*—He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh : the Lord shall have them in derision—Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree : the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son ; this day have I begotten thee,’ &c. Here then is a plain prediction of what Christ *himself would do.* And did he not, in spite of all their malice, baffle all their designs, and confound all their machinations, by *stretching forth his hand to heal*, and by that remarkable effusion of the *Holy Ghost*, with which his apostles were filled? Acts iv. 30, 31.

But, as he has quoted some additional texts to prove his point, accompanied with some remarks, it seems necessary to notice them. In the first place he adduces the parallel texts to Luke xxii. 22. in Math. xxvi. 24. Mark xiv. 21. and John xiii. 18. Matthew and Mark say, ‘The Son of Man goeth as it is written of him ; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed ! it had been good for that man, if he had not been born.’ Upon this he observes, “By comparing all the evangelists, we learn this important truth, that whatever thing was written in the word of God, as certainly future, was also *determined.*” p. 12. Let us see if this conclusion necessarily follows from the words of the Evangelists. They say, *the Son of Man goeth as it is written of him, &c.* Is the word *written* of synonymous import with *determined*? I believe it will be extremely difficult to prove, either that the word comes from the same root, or is used in the same sense by the inspired writers. The things WRITTEN respecting Judas and his wicked associates in this traitorous and murderous transaction, may be found in Psalms xlvi. 9. and xxii. In the first mentioned text, the prophetic Spirit thus described Judas ; ‘Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.’ Now, there is not one word said, nor is it even suggested, in either of the places referred to, that God had pre-determined to create Judas and influence him, by his own agency, to betray Christ. But the prophecies which went before concerning Judas were written ; and to those written predictions, which are a proof of divine prescience, the Evangelists refer, not to prove the divine determinations and exciting agency of God in the production of moral evil ; but to shew that the character so long foretold as the betrayer of Jesus Christ, was then disclosed in Judas ;

who, in conjunction with the Jewish Sanhedrim, had formed the nefarious determination to betray Christ into the hands of his enemies. St. Luke speaks of this determination, which had now resulted from the collusive consultation of the *chief priests* and *Judas*: Matthew, Mark, and John refer to the *written* predictions respecting these things, as a confirmation of their truth, and of the true character of Jesus of Nazareth, it being identified to its description in the prophetic scriptures. St. John says, ‘That the *scriptures* may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me.’ If this Evangelist had believed that the traitorous conduct of Judas was effected by the present exciting agency of God, resulting from a divine pre-determination, why did he not say, That the *determination* might be fulfilled, instead of saying, That the *scriptures* may be fulfilled? If he had used that language, would not Mr. Williston have thought his doctrine firmly established? So, we think ours undeniably established, because St. John has said, That the *scriptures* may be fulfilled; that is, the *scriptures are fulfilled* in the person and conduct of Judas, which is an additional evidence that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised *Messiah*. The silence of the *three* Evangelists, and of the Psalms from which they quote, in regard to the predetermining purpose of God in reference to this event, and the manifest allusion of St. Luke to the determination of Judas and the chief priests, afford no contemptible proof, that no such determination as Mr. W. has supposed ever existed.

That the determination spoken of is not referable to God, is, I think manifest from the consideration, that our Lord pronounced a *woe* upon the agent, by whom the Son of Man was betrayed. If all things which were written respecting future events, prove that such events were *determined*, as

Mr. W. affirms, why was this *woe* pronounced upon Judas? Must this unfortunate man have been sent to hell, and suffer never-ending torments for having been the necessary instrument of the redemption of the world? For, if Christ could not have died without the traitorous conduct of Judas, as Mr. W. supposes, then the redemption of the world depended, in part upon that treachery; it having been decreed and made necessary by the counsel of eternal wisdom. How deplorable the condition of the reprobates, to be doomed to hell for doing so much towards effecting the redemption of the elect! Mere passive and necessary agents, exactly fulfilling the secret will and counsel of God, in every respect answering the end for which they were born, and then sentenced to eternal fire for doing what they could no more have avoided than the immutable determination of God could be changed. Let those believe this who can believe that God is unjust and cruel. It is believed, that no man can reconcile such conduct with any of the divine perfections, not even his inflexible justice. And this is the point, I wish the reader to keep in mind; for Mr. W. seems to bring it into view with apparent reluctance; shrinking from it, as if he were conscious it could not bear the light.

The following texts are quoted by Mr. W. to prove that all the wicked conduct of his enemies was necessary to effect Christ's death; 'Being put to death in the flesh.' 1 Pet. iii. 18. 'His life was taken from the earth.' 'Ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain,' Acts ii. 23; and chap. iii. 'and killed the prince of life.' From his manner of introducing and applying these texts, his readers might infer that we did not believe that Christ was crucified and slain. Where is this fact denied? 'It is not contended that Christ *was not* crucified; but that crucifixion was not the imme-

diate *cause* of his death. And the *wilful* and treacherous conduct of Judas, and the horrid and unnecessitated rebellion of the Jews, made it necessary, so far as such human and wicked agents can make any thing necessary, ‘for Jesus to be crucified.’ Let. i. p. 47. The truth contended for in that letter is, that the traitorous and murderous conduct of Judas and others, was not made necessary by an eternal decree of God, nor effected by his present exciting agency: and though they actually took him, nailed him to the cross, and in this sense killed him, if he had not voluntarily resigned himself to their will, they could not have deprived him of his life. To deny this, is, we conceive, to degrade the Son of God to a mere creature, who would if it had been in his power, have extricated himself from their hands; but that they had such absolute control over him, that they forced his life from him by the barbarous method of crucifixion, contrary to his will. But as such an idea would be derogatory to the high character of the Saviour of the world, it seems, I think, more consistent to adhere to his own account of the cause of his death, than to any forced construction of the above passages of scripture. ‘Because *I lay down my life* that *I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.*’ John x. 17, 18.

No words can be more express, and more direct to the point than these. *No man*, says he, *taketh it from me.* Unless we palpably contradict the Son of God himself, we must understand those quotations from St. Peter as relating only to the facts, that his enemies, actuated by a murderous disposition, took the Saviour of the world, nailed him to the cross, and crucified him; he having voluntarily submitted himself into their hands. But this

voluntary submission, was an act of love towards the human family, without which his death could not have been effected; for, being God as well as man, he could have resisted all their assaults, and have delivered himself from all their malice. The murder of the Son of God is justly charged upon them by the Apostle. *He that hateth his brother is a murderer.* And they hated him without any just cause, despised him as an impostor, and exerted their murderous disposition as far as they could, following him with their bitter revilings, even to the last extremity of his tremendous sufferings, until he bowed his head and gave up the ghost. Therefore, it was very proper, when the Apostle, as the minister of God, was setting forth the heinousness of their sin, that they might be penetrated with a sense of the enormity of their crimes, to bring into view this daring, insulting, and murderous conduct towards the immaculate Saviour. But, let no man presume to contradict the words of Truth itself, who said, *No man taketh my life from me.*

It will be much safer for us to confess our ignorance of the precise meaning of St. Peter, than to give such a sense to his words as would make him contradict his Master, and as would represent the Almighty Saviour, merely as a *passive agent* in the wondrous act of redeeming the world; as would strip him of his peculiar glory as God-man, having an unlimited control over all things. But Mr. W. thinks, that the above words of the Apostles only convey an “idea of the *passivity* of his death.” p. 16. and believes it improper to suppose, that the death of Christ was miraculous. But if it were not miraculous, it was brought about by an ordinary operation of the laws of nature, in the same way that the malefactors died, who were crucified with him. Pray tell us then, where is the merit of his death? What! All these phenomena in the natural

world ; the sun darkened ! the rocks rending ! the dead arising ! the centurion trembling ! and above all, the Son of God groaning under the mighty load of human guilt, the curse of the Adamic law—the sword of eternal justice, peircing the vital strings of life, while the soldier's spear penetrated his body ! Nothing miraculous in all this ? All this according to the common course of nature ? How does this doctrine sink the grand dignity of the Son of God ! and deprive his voluntary submission to the *death of the cross* of that infinite merit which it actually possessed. That the reader may be able to form an estimate of the merits of this important question, he is referred to p. 39—<sup>13</sup> of the Errors of Hopkinsianism, and to Mr. W's Vindication, from p. 12—16.

To prove the *passivity* of Christ's death, and to shew that it depended upon the wicked conduct of his enemies, as the instruments of God's justice, Mr. W. quotes the following texts : ' Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him.' ' Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts : smite the Shepherd.' Zach. xiii. 7. And to prove that the wicked are God's sword, he quotes Psalm xvii. 13, 14. ' Deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword : from men which are thy hand.' But do these texts prove that Christ died only in consequence of the barbarous treatment of his enemies ? Or did he suppose that we denied that God, as the righteous governor of the moral world, overruled the malicious dispositions of the Jews, who were, in this instance, the sword of God in his hands ? If he had attended with impartiality to my remarks upon this subject, he might have saved himself the trouble of quoting these texts : for, it is no point of controversy between us, whether Christ *was crucified* with wicked hands. But only,

whether all those wicked hands which were lifted against Christ, were guided and directed by the hand of God in all they did ; and whether all this was so essentially necessary, that Christ could not have died without it. The fact that John the Baptist was put to death by an order from Herod, is not disputed ; but was that cruel order so necessary to effect the death of that holy man, that he could not have died without it ? In regard to the fact itself, that Christ was crucified by wicked hands, it is not disputed ; but was this conduct so necessary, that he could not have died without it ?

If Mr. Williston could substantiate his main proposition, that God's decree, and his exciting agency to bring that decree into effect, lays a *necessity* on all events that ever did, or ever will take place, then he would prove that the treachery of Judas, and all the hypocritical conduct of the Jews, were necessary to effect the redemption of the world by the death of Christ. But, 'Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to have entered into his glory ?' Undoubtedly ; for 'It became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings,' Heb. ii. 10. It became him, not to resist, but voluntarily to submit to the cruel treatment of his enemies, to yield his innocent back to their scourging, his face to their smiting, his head to be crowned with a crown of thorns, his hands and feet to be nailed to the cross, and finally to yield up his life as a *sacrifice for sinners*. It would have been unbecoming his character, as Mediator between God and man, to have escaped from these sufferings : hence it is asked, 'Ought not Christ to have suffered these things ?' So it may be said of Christians when persecuted by their enemies ; Ought they not to bear it with meekness and pa-

tience? And, if the wickedness of their enemies prompts them to persecute them even to death, they ought to bow with submission to these sufferings, glorifying God in death. But does it follow from these concessions, that all that persecuting conduct was made necessary by God's decree? I think not. But all those sufferings which originated merely from wicked men, would not have deprived Christ of his life, unless he had also voluntarily submitted to the penalty of the Adamic law, which was *death*. The anterior and moving cause of Christ's death, was God's love to mankind: *God so loved the world that he gave his Son*: The efficient cause, the inflexible justice of God, manifesting itself on account of original transgression: *The Lord has laid upon him the iniquities of us all*: The immediate and proximate cause, his own voluntary submission to the will of his Father, originating from his (Christ's) unbounded love to a lost world: *Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity.—Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood*. How expressly do these texts declare that Christ, not only loved us, but also *gave himself* for us? And how else did *he give himself* for us, than by voluntarily *making himself* an offering upon the cross, that he might thereby make atonement for the lost world? For, if he had given himself to ever so much reproach and suffering, if he had not *died*, the work of atonement would have been left undone. No, we are not indebted to the wickedness of the inhuman Jews, nor to the base treachery of Judas, for any part of this grand work of redemption. But to the great love 'wherewith he loved us, so as to *give himself* a ransom for our sins,' do we owe the endless debt of gratitude.—And, instead of pleading for the necessity of that sinful conduct of the crucifiers of Christ, may our attention be attracted to the infinite love of Jesus

Christ, and our hearts continually employed in ascribing honor and glory to him who said, ‘*Lo I come to do thy will, O God.*’

Let us, however, examine this subject a little farther. According to the scheme of Mr. W. all the wicked and murderous conduct of Christ’s enemies was made *necessary*, having been immutably fixed by an eternal determination of God: of course the death of Christ was made necessary by an eternal decree of God: but his death would not have been necessary, if man had not sinned: from this it undeniably follows that the first sin, and all subsequent sins, were made necessary by an immutable and efficacious decree of God. Here then, we are brought, as it were unexpectedly, to the antiquated doctrine of absolute necessity; and this necessity too, originating from an arbitrary act of the divine mind. Farther, whatever is *necessary*, *must be*; it cannot be avoided. Every thing, therefore, is as immovably fixed by the law of invincible necessity, as the throne of God itself. Where now is free moral agency? where is mutability and responsibility? They are fled from the universe. One law, the law of eternal necessity, governs all things and beings in heaven, earth and hell. Thus, by necessary consequence, does Mr. W. confound matter and mind, liberty and necessity, making them all equally dependent upon some extraneous impulse for all their movements. All are either lumps of inactive matter, or bound and necessary agents, destined to only one line of conduct, without the possibility of escape, unless God, by an irresistible impulse, turn us about.

Having noticed the scriptures to which Mr. W. appealed in support of his doctrine, we will now attend,

2dly. To his arguments—not all of them—for he uses so many that are totally foreign to the point, that it would be almost endless to pursue him in all

his meanderings. Instead of taking this tedious course, my design is to present the reader with those which have the most immediate bearing upon the disputed question. And let us begin with those with which he attempts to vindicate his doctrine from the unholy consequences with which I thought it was chargeable. To rescue his doctrine from referring unholiness to God, because it declares him to be the efficient cause of sin, he observes ;

" He has not only a counsel about all things, but he also *worketh all things* after that counsel." p. 30.

" There is no *unholy effect* while God is considered the agent, or efficient cause ; i. e. all his acts are holy acts." p. 31.

Connect these two propositions. 1. " God *worketh all things* after that counsel." This is a universal proposition : nothing is excepted in heaven, earth or hell ; among angels, men, or devils. 2. " There is no unholy effect while God is considered the agent or efficient cause—all his acts are holy acts." This is also a universal proposition—there is no exception ; and it is certain Mr. W. did not design to make any exceptions ; for these two propositions he has attempted to establish by a variety of arguments. Now, if God *work all things*, and if *all* his acts are *holy acts*, as Mr. W. has asserted, then *all unholiness* is banished from the universe ! This consequence is inevitable. It is not in the art or subtlety of man to avoid it. Thus has he, by a few strokes of his pen, made such a sweeping proposition as to destroy all kinds of unholiness from the creation. And if he could only do one thing more, he would ease the consciences of many burdened sinners. If he could reconcile his doctrine to matter of fact. If he could prove that no such thing as sin existed, he will then have proved his first proposition. But

as the sacred scriptures, and matter of fact, will continually be at war with him, by proving beyond the possibility of doubt, that unholiness exists, I think he will find himself under the necessity of abandoning his *premises* as untrue. If, however, he attempt to support them, in spite of all the infallible testimony against them, it may then be echoed from Europe to Asia, from Africa to America,— ‘Whatever is, is right.’ “God worketh all things; and all his acts are holy;” therefore, there are no unholy effects—no unrighteousness in the universe. Mankind have been deluded into the belief that adultery, murder, stealing, &c. are unholy actions. Nay; but say you, “these are the actions of men:” So indeed we always thought, until Mr. Williston had informed us, That God *worketh all things*. This universal affirmative proposition, which he supposes to be as true as the Bible, has undeceived us, and taught us that *God worketh all these abominations*: But what is more surprising still, he asserts that they are not abominations, they are all *holy acts*. Reprobates damned—for what? for not *resisting* the *irresistible* operation of God, when he worked *holiness* in them! Christ died for *holy sinners*! Do not draw back, Sir; it is too late to make exceptions,—unless you recant your Sermons and your Vindication.

Now I ask any man, and every man, who has not suffered prejudice totally to blind his understanding, whether such absurd propositions are either worthy of belief, or are capable of serious refutation. And as this is the vital part of his system, it might now be dismissed as undeserving of further notice, were it not that he has used so many methods to give it a plausible appearance.

But, take another instance of his manner of proving that there is no such thing as sin in the world.

" This is what we mean by the decrees of God, namely, *The things which he hath purposed in himself*"—" the purpose which he hath purposed in himself, is the rule by which he regulates his own conduct." p. 11. It is the manifest design of Mr. W. to maintain that this purpose comprehends *every thing*, *every cause and effect*, *every plan, purpose, will and intention*, *every secret desire* of the heart, motion and action in the physical and moral world, among angels and saints, sinners and devils. He makes no exceptions. It is as universal as creation, as unlimited as God's sphere of operation. And this purpose, respecting all these things, he maintains is according to the secret will of God. Hear him propose the second proposition. " His will is always holy. He has not two characters, the one malicious, and the other benevolent : But this is the specific idea contained in the text, viz. That God always acts in the spirit of his own requirements," p. 10. If this be so, if God's purpose include *every thing*, and if he always act from benevolence, in the spirit of his own requirements, his will being always holy, then every effect flowing from him, (and according to Mr. W. there is no effect but what does flow from God) every event, will, or action of all intelligent beings is holy. I appeal to every man who can understand when a conclusion is fairly drawn, if this be not a necessary consequence of his theory. The fact is so evident both from scripture and the experience and observation of mankind, that sin, or unholiness exists, that it would be an imposition upon my readers to undertake to prove it: and, as Mr. Williston's scheme of doctrine so manifestly proves that there is no such thing as sin, it must be false. Its falsity is susceptible of the plainest proof.

Whatever doctrine contradicts the testimony of God in his sacred word, and the experience of

mankind, must be false : but the doctrine of Mr. Williston, which asserts, that God *worketh all things*, and that *all he works is holy*, contradicts the sacred scriptures, and the experience of mankind, which declare the existence of sin or unholiness ; therefore that doctrine is false. The truth of the minor proposition has been seen in the preceding quotations from Mr. W's book.

To avoid this consequence, however, Mr. W. makes a distinction between what God does, and what man does. This distinction we consider very proper. It has a foundation in scripture and reason. And the rays of truth beaming forth from these fountains constrain the Hopkinsians to admit such a distinction. The decrees, says Mr. W. or the purpose, is the rule by which God regulates his own conduct : The commands are the rule of man's conduct. So say we. But the moment this distinction is admitted, Hopkinsianism is put to flight. That doctrine asserts, That God hath decreed *every thing*, and that he brings every thing to pass by his own agency. This sweeping proposition, like a mighty torrent rushing from its fountain, carries away with it motives, commands, free moral agency, and accountability, into the *dead sea of necessity*, where they quietly sink to rise no more—until the drain of truth is opened to draw off the stagnant waters of error.

Then, indeed, the Sun of righteousness rising upon it, we are enabled to behold motives, commands, and free responsible agents. We can then see a harmonious difference between the decrees of God, by which he regulates his own conduct, and the commands, by which man ought to regulate his conduct. But so long as Mr. W. holds fast his first principle, that God worketh *all things*, and brings *every thing* to pass by his own agency, his distinction founded in truth, is destroyed. And as

the distinction is founded in truth, and therefore ought to be supported by every lover of truth, and as the proposition, that God *worketh all things* is subversive of that true distinction, it follows that the proposition itself is false. Thus we find, that whenever the Hopkinsians suffer their free willing minds to be guided by the line of truth, they run directly against their system, and help us to expose its absurdity. Let us see if this be not so.

"God worketh all things according to his own will and pleasure"—"He brings every thing to pass." Are the decrees effected? "God worketh them." Are commands decreeed and promulgated? God does this also. Are these commands violated? If this violation be *any* thing, effect, or event; and if God worketh *all* things, he worketh this violation also. Is there any will, purpose, or design brought into existence in the hearts of men or devils? God worketh these also, if Mr. Williston's doctrine be true; for his first proposition being universal, it admits of no exceptions. Now, pray tell us, ye that are initiated into the mysteries of this divinity, what there is left, for either angels, men, or devils to do? Where now is his distinction? It has fled with commands and responsibility from the universe. But here are two propositions maintained by Mr. W, as contradictory to each other, as it would be to say that a man is fast bound, and at perfect liberty at the same time. We pronounce them absolutely irreconcilable. That their contradiction is so apparent, that it amounts to a self-evident absurdity. No argument, no reasoning or testimony, can make their opposition more apparent. We call upon Mr. W. either to do away their apparent contrariety, or abandon one of them. To do the first, we think him totally incompetent: to do the latter, will be to renounce Hopkinsianism, which, we fear he is not willing to do. We have a

faint hope, however, that he has so much regard for scripture, reason, and the consistency of truth, (that bright offspring of Deity), that he will undergo the mortification of acknowledging his error, rather than sacrifice so many invaluable blessings. However, we are but fallible men, like himself. We may, therefore, labour under a mistake. Our minds are open to conviction. And if he will reconcile these jarring propositions, so that we can perceive their harmony, and likewise prove, that, consistently with his doctrine, there is any unholiness in the world, we will frankly acknowledge our mistake, and, being thankful for this additional knowledge, sit down in perfect tranquility, believing that inasmuch as all things are decreed, therefore all things are right; we were right while we opposed him, and we are right in ceasing to oppose him. So without acknowledging any criminal ignorance, or error, we can unite on true Hopkinsian principles.

The reader, however, need have no hesitancy which proposition to sacrifice. It is a self-evident truth, and also every where taught in the scriptures, that many things are brought to pass by wicked men and devils, which God neither decreed nor commanded. Satan is represented as *working in the hearts of the children of disobedience*. Here then is one thing the Lord does not work. '*Depart from me*, will the Lord Jesus say to the wicked in the last day, *all ye workers of iniquity*.' Here also were *workers* besides God, and *works*, which were not brought to pass by him. The sacred scriptures of truth must not be sacrificed upon the altar of Hopkinsian divinity. *They were given by the inspiration of God*. *That*, according to their own concessions, is not revealed in the word of God. It is, say they, his secret will and purpose. And it may well be called secret, for the penetrating eye of

truth has never yet discovered its existence ; no ray of light has ever carried its impression to the mind. And will any man forsake the *revealed* will of God, attested and proved by predictions, by miracles, by the blood of Jesus Christ, and by the bleeding testimony of martyred saints, to follow a *secret*, which, when we are informed what it is, appears like a devouring lion, tormenting thousands in hell fire, for having fulfilled its secret *workings*, and yielded to its *secret influence* ! If a blush of shame or of indignation, could redden the face of an Angel, I think the promulgation of such a blasphemous doctrine might cause them to hide their faces before the holy throne.

I will lay before the reader, one more of the absurdities, which flows from Mr. Williston's doctrine. He believes in the day of judgment, in which all men will be rewarded or punished according to their works : but he also believes, if he has written what he believes, that all things were immutably fixed from eternity, and that every thing is *worked* and brought to pass by the Almighty. It has already been proved, that if God do every thing, there is nothing left for man to do. And if nothing for him to do, for what is he to be judged ? Why must the wicked be condemned and the righteous rewarded ? They have neither of them done any thing, if Mr. Williston's first principle be true ; and therefore they are not subjects of moral government, neither rewardable nor punishable. This conclusion, we think self-evident. It needs no argument, no extraneous testimony to make its truth more apparent. We may indeed reason *ad absurdum* : we may suppose it false, for the purpose of seeing the absurd consequences which must result from its supposed falsity. If then man is to be punished, or rewarded for doing nothing, or for being a mere passive agent in the hands of God, then

the axe with which you hew the wood, the whip with which you correct your child, the quadrant with which you ascertain the latitude and longitude, the compass with which you direct your course, may all be subjects of reward and punishment. But the supposition is so manifestly absurd, that it would be presuming too much upon the patience of the reader, to pursue it any farther. The doctrine of Mr. W. therefore is totally subversive of the day of judgment. And as it is one of the important truths of revelation, that mankind will be judged according to their works, and as Mr. W's. scheme entirely overthrows the possibility of their being thus judged, therefore that doctrine must be false.

To all this, it is probable Mr. W. will reply, "We go farther in asserting free agency, than the Arminians themselves do." We "hold that all rational beings are free agents, however great, and however confirmed their depravity," p. 20. On reading this passage, I began to revive, and faintly hoped that some new light would be reflected on this mysterious subject—That it might be *possible* to perceive some agreement between Mr. W's doctrine of universal divine efficiency and human liberty. I therefore eagerly perused the pages upon this subject; but how was my faint hope blasted, when I found a tacit acknowledgment that such agreement is impossible. For, it is presumed, had he seen any possible way to reconcile those two propositions, that, with all the help he had in writing his book, it would have been done. That the reader may determine for himself whether he has shewn any agreement between these jarring sentiments, I will lay before him the principal arguments he has used for this purpose. His definition of free agency may be found in p. 20.

"What is a free agent? Is it not a rational being who has faculties to discern between good and evil, and who exercises *choice*, and who is accountable for his conduct?" This then is his free agent. Let us look at him. The devils and all the reprobates are excluded, by an eternal decree, and by the present exciting agency of God, from participating in any of the blessings of the gospel, can do nothing but sin, being held under an invincible moral inability, which God utterly refuses to destroy; but though they can no more cease from sinning than the *unalterable determinations* of God respecting their present and eternal state can be *altered*, yet they can *distinguish* between good and evil, and can *choose* the *evil*, not the *good*: Now, according to Mr. W. these beings are free moral agents, and accountable for their conduct! A man shut up in the prison for some capital crime, may *choose* to be at liberty; but his chains, the bolted doors, and the walls of his prison, entirely prevent him; but yet, according to the above definition of free agency, this poor man is perfectly free, merely because he *chooses* to be free! A fish caught in the net, feeling uneasy in his confinement, *chooses* and struggles to be free, he therefore is a free accountable agent. *Judas* was predestined by the decree of God, to be covetous, to betray Christ; his faculties enabled him to *distinguish* that conduct to be a moral evil, but having no *moral ability* to *do* otherwise, he could not but sin; nevertheless, according to Mr. W. he was a free moral agent, and responsible for his treacherous conduct! The elect, when compelled by Almighty power, *choose* to love God, and to have "some holiness and some sin," because they cannot *choose* otherwise; they are therefore free moral agents, and responsible beings. How studiously is all ability to *do*, as well as to *choose*, denied to man in this definition of Mr. W. It ap-

pears to us too evident to need much proof, that if this be all that is necessary to constitute a free agent, every man, who is yet a probationer, is something more than a free responsible agent.— Suppose Mr. W. had *chosen* to write his book, but had found himself unable, whether from a *natural*, or *moral inability* to have written a single sentence; would he have considered himself a free agent in that case—free to write or not to write? and would he have been accountable for not writing a book which he had no power to do? It seems he *chose* to reconcile his doctrine of decrees, with human liberty; but he failed in the attempt for want of the powerful presence of truth: was he therefore free to effect that reconciliation which he had no power to *do*? And is he accountable for not doing it, seeing it was impossible? This would be a hard case.

It is granted, that, if under such circumstances, a man is a free moral agent, we may perceive some agreement between such a free agent, and irresistible decrees; for the choice of a man being fixed by the exciting agency of God, and all his actions directed by an irresistible impulse, he may choose, in this sense, as God impelled him. But it is equally manifest, that the most essential property of a free moral agent is wanting in Mr. W's definition, namely, a *power* to choose among a variety of objects, which he will, without being compelled by an extraneous power; and also, in most instances, a power to *do* or *not to do*, good or evil. This power we think essential to constitute a free moral agent.

Let us now hear how he will reconcile his doctrine with free moral agency. “As to free agency, I would say, 1. We are *conscious* of a different freedom from the pen with which we write.” Then we are *conscious* that the above definition of free agency is essentially defective. But go on. “Con-

sciousness belongs to the first kind of proof. I know that I *choose* to write, but I know that my pen has no choice about it. This makes as much as a small *shade* of difference between me and my pen. See p. 24. 2dly. My conscience either accuses, or else excuses my actions, and passes judgment even upon the thoughts of my heart." This is good proof; and it is a proof too, that our conscience tells us we might have done otherwise; and also that Mr. W's definition is very imperfect.— Proceed. "This is another proof that I am not a machine." More than that, Sir. It is a proof that the doctrine of a universal divine efficiency is a *machine* of man's invention. "3. We treat one another as free agents. This appears from all the regulations of society, such as having laws, and judges, prisons, &c." For what? To shut up the reprobates, who have exactly answered the end of their existence, by fulfilling the counsel of God's will? Unhappy men! Bound by an irresistible influence, to *only one* line of conduct, and that according to the good pleasure of God, must nevertheless come under the penalty of law, be haled before the Judge, and condemned to the prison of hell! But let us hear Mr. W. out. "4. The Supreme Being treats us as free and accountable agents, by giving us a *moral law*, and by rewarding and punishing us according to the character we possess.— Are not these as good and substantial proof of our free agency as we could desire?" p. 20. It is answered, yes. But they are more—they are not *only evidence* that we are free agents, but also good and substantial proof, that we are possessed of power to *do*, as well as to *choose* to do. Nay, more yet. They are undeniable evidence that the doctrine of Hopkinsian decrees, is totally incompatible with free moral agency. Not so, says Mr. W.

"Let us now see what proof there is of our entire dependence on God; I mean dependence on him when considered as free moral agents; i. e. that *our will* is dependent on his agency. The *scriptures* assert this dependence, and reason can discover no other consistent way. Paul tells the *Philippians* that it was God that worked in them to *will and to do.*" True; but did he tell the *Galatians* that God worked in them to *will and to do*, when they departed from the simplicity of the gospel? Did Jesus Christ tell the people that God, while the husbandman slept, *sowed tares among the wheat?* Did he not say an *enemy* hath done this? Did king *David* say that the *LORD God worketh in him to will*, i. e. to lust after Bathsheba, and to *do*, i. e. to commit adultery, and to murder Uriah her husband? Did the Lord Jesus declare to the wicked Jews, that God *worked* in them to *will and to do*, when he told them, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father *ye will do?*" This is the question in dispute between us; whether *God works in the hearts of wicked men to cause them to will and to do wickedly*; and not, whether he works in the hearts of sinners to induce them, as free moral agents, to repent, forsake their sins, believe in Christ, and be saved: nor whether he works in the hearts of believers, to *will and to do*, that is, *to work out their salvation with fear and trembling.* This exhilarating doctrine we know, and always believed and taught, is perpetually inculcated in the sacred scriptures. It is true, we do not believe that God works *irresistibly*. The sinner and the saint have it in their power to resist this gracious influence of divine operation. But are sinners equally dependent on God for their *wicked designs and actions?* Let us see if Mr. W. touches this question in his plan of reconciling his system of decrees with free moral agency. "In the close of

his epistle to the Hebrews, he prayed that the *God* of peace would *work in them*, that which was pleasing in his sight.” Good. But do we find him anywhere praying that God would *work in them* an *evil heart of unbelief*, that they might *depart from the living God*? Did he anywhere declare that God *worked* in those *apostates* mentioned in ch. vi. 5—7, and ch. x. 26—30. to *cause* them by an *efficient operation*, to *crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame*—to *sin wilfully after they had received the knowledge of the truth*—to do *despite to the Spirit of grace*? Mr. Williston’s doctrine makes evil men and seducers, backsliders and apostates, as much dependent on God, for all their volitions, by an *efficient operation*, as are the saints for all their volitions and actions. But that there is no scripture warrant for that doctrine is manifest; for, if there had been any, I presume he would have favoured us, in this paragraph, at least with one text. That he has not, the reader shall judge for himself. “This implied, that if they had any thing in them which was pleasing, that is, any good moral exercises, God himself must produce them in their hearts.” Very true: but does it also imply, that if they have any thing displeasing, that is, any wicked moral exercises, God himself must produce them in their hearts? It would be extremely difficult, I think, to prove this. But,—“The apostle James, speaking of the new birth, says; ‘Of his own will begat he us.’ And Jesus Christ taught that men are born of the Spirit. And God says in the prophecy of Ezekiel, ‘A new heart will I give you.’” But did either the prophet or the apostles, or the Lord Jesus, when speaking of the *old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts*, say that this was begotten according to the *will of God*, —that *he* had given it to them who possessed it, for the purpose of enticing them into sin, that they

might be damned? A text of scripture proving this doctrine, so dear to Mr. Williston, would have answered his purpose. He shall be permitted, however, to speak for himself. "There might be innumerable quotations made from the scriptures, to prove that men are dependent on God for their moral exercises." What! *wicked moral exercises*? I believe not. I know of none. And, it is believed, he knew of none, else we should have seen them in this quotation. "And if the inspired volume had not taught this, reason could not teach us any other scheme, for we cannot conceive of any independence in *created beings*." "Here then are two things proved from the bible; so fully proved that there cannot be any mistake: why then should we deny either of them?" p. 21. Sure enough—why should we? For my part, if he will restrict the dependence of the will on the exciting agency of God, to the willing of *good things*, and the dependence of men for "moral exercises," to *good moral exercises*; and admit the qualifying term *absolute independence in created beings*, I feel no disposition to controvert a single sentiment he has advanced on this subject, with the exception of his definition of human liberty and responsibility; for, I do not think he has "proved that definition from the bible," nor from the reason of things. But, though I heartily agree, in the general, with what he has said in favour of our dependence on God for all *good moral exercises*, I am quite certain that in all this he has not touched the disputed question. As before observed, we never dreamed of exalting man into an independent being, nor of making him independent of divine grace for his *moral ability* to repent, believe, and be saved; nor yet, of making him the author of his new birth, or of his present and eternal salvation. If Mr. Williston will point to a single sentence in my book, or to any of our

established doctrines, which, by a fair and candid construction, will authorize the belief, that we ascribe to man a power, *independent* of the *direct operation* of the Holy Spirit, to will or to do, any good word or work, I hereby promise to retract it.—What then has he effected in all this? Just nothing at all to his purpose. He has not even attempted to prove, that God, by an irresistible influence, works in wicked men to induce them to commit moral evil. He well knew, that the moment he attempted this, he would not only fly in the face of his position respecting human liberty, but also impeach the inflexible justice of Almighty God, in the punishment of obstinate sinners. But that is the very point in debate between us; otherwise there *is no* difference. If Mr. W. hold that God works upon the hearts of saints and sinners, by a resistible influence, to induce them to walk in the *good and right way*—so do we. If he say, that the sinner is dependent on God for his existence as a free moral agent, so say we. The only point of difference then, on this subject is, does God *work irresistibly* in sinners to *make them good*, and *irresistibly* on sinners to *make them bad*, and to *keep them so*? The truth of this he has not attempted to prove, in his reconciling effort. And I believe it beyond the power of any man to prove, or even to perceive, any harmony between the doctrine of an absolute, universal, and irresistible divine efficiency, and human liberty, or responsibility. This belief is confirmed from the consideration, that, if Mr. W. had had any prospect of reconciling these two opposite points of his scheme, he would, while writing professedly on that subject, have given us some clue, some light, some argument, or some scripture. But he has given us neither. I consider therefore this silence as an ample acknowledgment of his total *natural and moral inability* to

reconcile his doctrine of decrees, with any scriptural, philosophical, or rational definition of free moral agency. One or the other, therefore, of these positions must be sacrificed. And as Mr. W. has taken his stand among free moral agents, by admitting that such human beings exist, it is to be hoped that he will, for the sake of so desirable associates, for the sake of the dignity of rational beings; and above all, for the sake of honouring the justice, wisdom, and goodness of God, continue to occupy this pleasant field, and to enjoy the society of his free willing friends, and with them offer a free willing sacrifice to that God, who delights to unfold the wonders of his love, to his willing people; and who is bound from the rectitude of his own nature to punish those sinners who obstinately persist in their iniquities. Will he deny himself all these scriptural advantages, rather than abandon the untenable fort of Hopkinsian decrees? We sincerely pray that this may not be done.

In p. 21. note, Mr. W. quotes the following passage from my book. ‘We freely grant that the sinner does not take one step towards salvation, until divine grace moves him thereto, by enlightening his understanding, and by influencing his will,’ —and he seems quite at a loss to understand what I mean by *influencing the will*. His observations upon this subject are calculated to induce a belief that we deny the necessity of divine grace in regeneration; and, as if, notwithstanding this denial, this sentence slipt from me inadvertently. I am extremely sorry to be under the necessity of noticing such disingenuous attempts to misrepresent the doctrine of an antagonist. I greatly fear the public faith will be weakened in the integrity of those who resort to such pitiful methods to defend their cause. It seems hardly necessary, since our sentiments have been so publicly, so uniformly

known upon this subject, so fully set forth in the established articles of our church, and also so frequently insisted on in my letters to Mr. Williston—I say, these things being so, it appears unnecessary to attempt a refutation of such insinuations.—We pity the man who is driven to such straits to maintain his cause. Every such effort, it is believed, will be considered by all candid men, a practical acknowledgment of his inability to oppose us with success, on the scriptural ground we occupy.

But Mr. W. after a tedious effort to ascertain what I mean by God's influencing the will, concludes, that because we do not hold to entire *independence*, if we do not destroy human liberty as much as he does, yet we very much abridge it.—“If therefore divine influence on the will operated in the same way to abridge moral liberty, or free agency, the least influence would impair it.” p. 22. We grant, that so far as man is *influenced* by motive or otherwise, his liberty is so far impaired; and if this influence is *irresistible* his liberty is entirely destroyed. But Mr. W. had no reason to believe from any thing I had written, that we ascribe absolute independence to man. There are many things with which man is blessed, that are totally independent of his choice. His existence: The work of Redemption: The external and internal evidences of divine revelation: All the proper objects of faith exhibited in that revelation: The gifts and callings of God: The invisible operations of the Holy Spirit: The offers of eternal life, on the conditions of the gospel: The conditional threatenings of eternal death: The power to comply with the one and to shun the other: All these inestimable blessings have flowed from the plenitude of un-created goodness, eternal justice and wisdom:—they depended not upon any choice or action of

man. Here then we see man's dependent state.—There are a thousand things which man may *choose to have* and *choose to do* but he cannot for want of power, or opportunity. And respecting all such things which are beyond his ability, he is neither at liberty to do, nor responsible for not doing.—To instance only in one case. Mr. W. *chose* to reconcile his scheme of universal divine efficiency, with free moral agency; but not possessing adequate powers for such a herculean work, he failed in the attempt. In this instance, the extreme difficulty, if not the utter impossibility of the subject, limited his moral and natural agency, and furnishes an apology for his failure, and exempts him from accountability. In all such impossible cases, man's liberty is limited. Those blessings which come independent of his choice, declare his dependence: and those beyond his power, circumscribe his free agency, and indicate the limited nature of his natural and moral powers. The *particular providence of God* may also frequently hedge up the way of the wicked to prevent them from doing all the mischief they choose, and might otherwise have done; thus 'The wrath of men shall praise him; the remainder of wrath thou wilt restrain.' In such instances *their* agency is circumscribed. For wise reasons also, may good men be prevented from doing all the good their benevolent hearts might choose, and which, were it not for adverse circumstances, which can only be resolved into a mysterious, but righteous providence, they might have done. In this sense *their* liberty is limited; and where their liberty ends, there their responsibility terminates: for no man is responsible for that which is beyond his power. No probationer will be condemned for not repenting when he could not. But all probationers are commanded to repent: and all men either are, or have been, or

will be probationers ; and therefore all men will have had power to repent. Hence all men are free moral agents in regard to the work of repentance. To convict them of sin, “*by a direct operation of the spirit of God upon the heart*” is God’s work : this work is independent of their agency ; but they may resist the influence of this direct operation, ‘quench the spirit,’ and thereby harden themselves in iniquity. In this they exercise the prerogatives of free moral agents, for which therefore they are responsible : Or, they may yield to this direct operation, indulge a godly sorrow for sin, forsake it, pray to God for mercy : in this penitential exercise they act the part of free moral agents, and are responsible. To such penitent sinners, God reveals the Lord Jesus, in the peculiar glories of his character, as God-Man, who is every way qualified for their Saviour ; commands them to reverence him as the Son of God, and to believe in him as their Almighty Redeemer : but believing is their act, in which they exercise their moral powers as accountable beings. On condition of their thus believing, God restores them to his favour, adopts them as his children, sheds his love abroad in their hearts, and they are enabled to cry *Abba Father*. This is God’s work. Now the commandments of God are obeyed, with a loving, filial, obedient heart. It is God’s work to command—man’s to obey : obeying he acts as a free moral agent, for which he is accountable to God. Here is, if I may so call it, a harmonious opposition—a perfect agreement between divine and human agency. God draws ; man runs after him : God works upon his heart ; and man co-operates with his God. He leads ; man follows : He persuades, not compels ; man yields to the persuasion : He gives ; man receives : He promises ; man believes : He threatens ; man avoids : He sheds

abroad his love in the heart; man loves him in return: and thankfully adoring the benevolent hand from which he receives so many unmerited favours, he runs the way of God's commands with obedient delight.

Who will say any thing against this limited dependent, free moral agency? Is it not scriptural? rational? Is it not perfectly compatible with that divine influence so necessary to change and purify the human heart? Here is no direct, positive, and irresistible influence to compel man to commit sin.—*That* is the doctrine we oppose; and not the doctrine of a persuasive divine influence to good, which is compatible with human responsibility. Let then, our opponents, if they wish to oppose us, meet us on this ground, and, if truth will beat us off, we will gladly abandon it, and surrender ourselves captives to that truth by which we are conquered. If this be not the point of difference between us and the Hopkinsians, I know of no difference at all.—And if it be not, let us sit down together under the spreading branches of the *tree of life*, and regale each other with the reviving fruits of redeeming love. Let us not fight about words. Verbal disputes are too trivial to awaken animosity, or to engage the pen of controversy.

In page 22, Mr. Williston introduces a singular argument. "Now my antagonist manifestly takes this ground, that if the Lord directly operate upon the heart of a Christian, to produce the most fervent love, such love is not of the nature of holiness, any more than the shining of the sun, or the flowing of the water; or, in other words, if it be God that makes me holy, then I am not holy." After shewing the absurdity of this reasoning, (as was very easy for him to do, if I had taken that ground) by advert ing to the grand work of creation, in p. 23, he observes, "And who will say, that if God

made him holy, then he was not holy?" It is extremely difficult to reply to these remarks without reflecting, either upon the understanding, or upon the sincerity of Mr. W. and I wish to do neither. Doubtless it must be painful to the reader, as it is to the author, to be under the necessity, for the vindication of the truth, so frequently to divert the attention from the subject more immediately under consideration, to notice the infirmities of our fellow creatures. We may, however, derive some benefit from it, in addition to the developement of the controverted truth; we may perceive evidences of the depravity of human nature, the imperfection of human judgment, truths expressly taught in the sacred scriptures; and hence we derive an argument in favour of the divine authority of that book, which, by way of eminence is called the Book of God. We may also have an opportunity of admiring the exuberant grace of God manifesting itself in Christ Jesus, through whom God is willing, whenever they repent, to pardon the aberrations of his wandering creatures. Thus, while we may shed a tear over suffering humanity, and indulge a groan on account of the miseries to which sin has subjected us, we may adore the patience and long-forbearance of our heavenly Father, who is ever ready for his Son's sake, to forgive our follies. It is possible the ardour of his mind, in the warmth of controversy, may have betrayed Mr. W. into this very erroneous representation of my ground of argumentation. Praying to be kept from the like mistakes, and requesting the reader to pardon Mr. W. I return to the argument.

The ground assigned me by him, I never occupied, namely, "That if God make man holy, then he is not holy; or if he produce love in me, that love is not of the nature of holiness." I was so far from taking my stand here, that I endeavoured to prove,

that if God produce all things, then all things *are holy*. That this is a correct statement, shall be proved. Let. i. p. 26. ‘If the Almighty be holy, as you must admit, nothing unholy can proceed from him.’ Let. iii. p. 131. ‘A good *cause* will produce a *good effect*, and a *bad cause* a *bad effect*.’ Mr. W. has produced no quotation from my book to prove his assertion, and therefore my simple denial is all he had a right to demand, because the burden of the proof lay upon him. The ground of argumentation I occupied was this, That if God *compel* man, by an *irresistible* influence, either to holiness or unholiness, his *responsibility* is annihilated, and therefore the one is not rewardable, nor the other punishable upon the principles of justice and goodness. It matters not how man came by his moral qualities in regard to his having them. They must be estimated from their *own nature*, and not from the source from whence they proceeded: But whether man be *accountable* for them, as a free moral agent, materially depends upon the *manner* of his having come into the possession of them.

As Mr. Williston has adverted to the original creation of man, we will take that circumstance for an illustration. How strange would it have appeared, if when Adam was created and formed, God had addressed him in the following language—‘Well done good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many’! Might not Adam have justly expressed his astonishment, and have exclaimed, O my Creator, what things? I have no consciousness of any existence until this moment. I never thought, willed nor acted, and therefore could not have been faithful over any thing. Why then dost thou speak of rewarding me, for acts which I never performed, and for possessing qualities which thou, O my Father, gavest me from thy own bounty?

The grand work of creation, to which Mr. W. has alluded, to prove that God worketh all things according to the counsel of his will, is as foreign to the point in debate, as it would be to say that because God by his Holy Spirit changes the heart of a sinner, from sin to holiness, he therefore in the same manner changes the heart of a saint from holiness to sin. We know that the work of creation in the beauty, order and perfection, which were visibly manifested in every part of it, is a sublime display of the wisdom, power and goodness of the Creator; and that every part of it flowed from his omnipotent and prolific hand, without any choice or action of man: and also being made superlatively good, every way worthy of its Maker, the entire perfection of all its parts, their mutual dependence, their manifest adaption to each other, all perfectly qualified to answer the design of their sacred Author, they received his approbation: *He saw them all very good.* But does the moral world now, in its present state of degradation, exhibit these marks of order and perfection? and does it receive the approving language of God, as it did in the beginning? ‘When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?’ And is man now as passive in the hands of God, as the elements were out of which man was first formed? Certainly not.

To shew how irrelevant this instance of Almighty power and wisdom is, to prove Mr. Williston’s position, we will suppose God to have created and stamped man with a *sinful* character; and then, because he *was sinful*, should threaten to dash him to pieces for *being sinful*. How would such conduct appear? Just and good? Would it not have furnished man with just cause of complaint? Might he not have complained, and said, “Why O my Creator! Why must I be punished for being sinful?”

since I had nothing to do in my creation, nor in the formation of my character? Thou sayest, indeed, that I possess sinful qualities; but am I accountable for them? Thou gavest them me, entirely independent of my choice or action; and if thou art displeased with me, because of these sinful qualities, is it—(O my Maker, be not angry with me, if I presume to plead with thee for a moment)—is it my fault? I had no control over thy power, nor over the elements from which I was formed. Must I then suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, for having been made by thee as I am? O be merciful to thy poor dependent creature. If thou hadst made me with a *holy nature*, and I had voluntarily abused my high privileges, thy inflexible justice might have punished me, although perhaps, as thou art unbounded in goodness, thou mightest have pitied me."

We grant that every character which God has formed, is *as he* formed it, possessing those qualities which he gave it: but we insist, upon the authority of eternal truth, that every character which is formed by the divine hand is *good*, possessing all the qualities essential to its perfection: and we also insist, that so far as a holy character is dependent on God for its qualities, although it may be worthy of praise, it is not accountable for those qualities, nor *deserving* of reward. But we think it equally certain that sinners are not indebted to God for their sinful character. If when Mr. Williston referred us to the work of creation for proof of his doctrine, he had proved that God had created man sinful, he might have proved his point. As it now stands, I consider all he has said upon this subject a desponding effort to defend his tottering system. He well knew that we never denied the original perfection of the creation, nor its entire dependence on God for its existence. This evasion was

exposed in Letter i. p. 48. All therefore that he has said about God's having created the world, is as foreign to the point at issue between us, as if he had laboured to prove that the sun did not create itself. Why then resort to this instance of Almighty power and wisdom, to prove that God is the effectuating cause of moral evil? Should he not rather have employed his talent in proving what he so frequently insists upon, namely, that God is as much the author of *wicked*, as of *holy* characters? But does the fact that all things were created *good*, prove that God has made mankind *bad*? Let then Mr. W. fix upon some other data as the foundation of his superstructure, besides the creation of the world, or acknowledge himself incompetent to defend it. Those divine materials will never suit in an edifice which is composed of so much moral evil. Let him attempt a reconciliation of his contradictory propositions, as he has laid them down, namely, as universals—*All* things are *worked* by the Almighty, and *all* things are according to his good pleasure. Let him shew, if able, how the *justice* and *goodness* of God can be vindicated in punishing the reprobates with everlasting destruction, who have exactly fulfilled the counsel of his will, being excited to all their actions by the secret will, and efficient operation of God. And let him bring plain unequivocal scripture, and unadulterated reason for proof. Until this is done, and we believe it never will be, we shall remain in the full persuasion that his edifice is founded in error, and therefore must ultimately fall before the steady gales of gospel truth.

Perhaps some of our readers may think we have already expended more time and labour in demolishing this tottering theory, than it deserves. So we also think—but not more than *they* deserve. It is principally for *their sakes* that this controver-

sy, is continued. They have immortal souls to save or loose ; and it is all-important to have removed out of their path, the stumbling blocks which Hopkinsian divinity has laid in their way, that they may come to Christ, and receive that life, for which they were created and redeemed. To do this effectually, we submit to canvass the arguments of Mr. W. still farther.

' But why talk of the impediments of Hopkinsian divinity ? Is not your own doctrine attended with the same difficulties you have inferred from ours ? ' " The author of the letters was aware of the same difficulties attending his scheme which he charges upon ours : He suggested the difficulty without doing any thing to remove it. In his preface he says, ' Whatever mysteries therefore, there may be in the science of human nature, and however difficult it may be to obviate the objections which may be urged from *prescience*, there is no fact more certain than this, that man is a free agent as it respects his moral conduct.' So say we : However difficult it may be to obviate the difficulties which may be urged from *foreordination*, there is no fact more certain than this, that man is a free agent as it respects his moral conduct. If our antagonist had stopped to obviate the objections which may be urged from prescience, he would have furnished us with the means of obviating those which may be urged from foreordination ; at least so far as the absolute certainty of future events is concerned.'

p. 28.

From this quotation it is obvious that our author infers the same difficulties from divine *prescience*, as from Calvinistic *foreordination*. It is presumed, however, that a little attention to the specific difference between them, will evince that while *foreordination*, Calvinistically understood, involves the doctrine of fatalism, and reduces all things to the

standard of strict necessity—*prescience* is perfectly compatible with human liberty ; and while it fixes the culpability of criminal actions upon the sinner himself, it encircles the divine character with the glory of man's salvation. We will attempt an elucidation of this profound subject, requesting the reader to make allowance for the barrenness of human language.

That this may be done, it is important to state the difference between *foreordination* and *foreknowledge*. According to the doctrine of foreordination, every thing, every motive, volition and action are *made* certain by an immutable decree, which was made antecedent to man's existence, and by a present exciting, divine efficiency ; and all this so *certainly fixed*, that they could not have been otherwise. This is the doctrine espoused by Mr. Williston. The doctrine of *prescience* teaches, that God foreknew, (if it be proper to use that term in application to Deity, whose knowledge is infinite) a thing *would* be so, because he saw his intelligent creatures *would do* so. This observation must be restricted to those events which depended upon the voluntary choice and conduct of rational beings. In regard to the creation of the world, and all those events which depended entirely upon God's power, without the co-operation of intelligent agents, *their certainty* depended upon his will and power alone. Having formed the determination to create and bring them to pass, his power effected their existence, for which existence, as they were entirely passive, they are not accountable. As far as such existence and events are concerned, we agree with the Calvinists, that they resulted from the power and wisdom of God, and are predicated of his predeterminations ; and that he could not have foreknown their existence, unless he had determined they should exist. But the doctrine of a universal divine efficiency as-

serts that *all events*, even those which are brought into existence by free moral agents, are equally the effect of God's uncontrollable decree. Here we beg leave to differ from them ; for, in respect to those events which are dependent upon the volitions and actions of free moral agents for their existence, divine knowledge, although it saw them, it had no influence in their production, but saw them produced by the voluntary agency of free and responsible beings. Whereas, according to Hopkinsian decrees, God saw all things, all the volitions and actions of men, in future existence *made certain* by an irresistible influence ; and that their *certainty* depended entirely upon the previous appointment or decree of God ; the object of which decree is effected by the present existing influence of God, by motives or otherwise. It is believed that it requires no great exertion of the understanding to perceive that man's free agency is entirely excluded in having any thing to do in fixing the certainty of any event whatever, by this doctrine of Mr. Williston.

But, according to the doctrine of universal pre-science which we teach, that perfection in Deity which is denominated *knowledge*, saw those events which depended upon the voluntary conduct of free agents, originating from the *right use* or *abuse* of their active powers exerting themselves under the persuasive influence of motives, or the resistible control of God's moral government ; and the *certainty* of all such events thus produced, depended, not upon an order of God that they *must* have been so, but upon the free choice and actions of men, who, by their conduct declared they *should* be so. To illustrate this idea, and this distinction by an example : God created the world, and 'planted a garden eastward in Eden ; and there he placed the man. And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and

good for food ; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.' 'And the LORD God commanded the man' — 'of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it.' Gen. ii. 8—16. All this was God's own work : it resulted entirely from his own good pleasure : He acted as a wise, benevolent, powerful, and independent Sovereign. But man transgressed this law. This was *man's* work : it resulted entirely from an abuse of his free moral agency uninfluenced by God's decree or agency : Man acted as a free moral and responsible agent. The first event originated entirely from God's choice and action, and was therefore made certain, and of course was known to be certain, because God determined it should so be, and therefore could not have been otherwise : The second event, the violation of the divine precept, originated from an unnecessary abuse of free moral agency, and was made certain, and therefore was seen by the divine prescience as certainly depending upon the free volitions of man, who freely determined it should be so ; but it might have been otherwise, if man had, as he might have done, obeyed the voice of his Maker. This appears to us to be a plain, scriptural, and rational distinction ; and that it perfectly obviates every difficulty which may be urged from the scriptural doctrine of prescience, against free moral agency, and human responsibility. But will the same arguments remove the difficulties which may be urged from the doctrine of Hopkinsonian decrees, against man's responsibility ? It is thought not. For, according to that doctrine, Adam's sin was as much determined in the divine mind, and as much depended upon the influence of divine agency and efficiency, as did the creation : and therefore man is as devoid of dispraise for that act of disobedience, as he was for his existence ;

both of which were determined from eternity, and effected by divine power, and were, according to Mr. W. perfectly agreeable to the good pleasure of God. Whereas, the doctrine of prescience declares that there was no necessity originating from an antecedent decree, respecting the first, or any other transgression; but that, and every other transgression, was effected by the free use, but manifest abuse of man's moral and physical powers.

Now infinite foresight saw Adam acting, and saw all the results of his actions, as certainly as it did the existence of the world, the existence and local situation of Adam in the delightful garden of Eden; but it saw, at the same time, that the existence of the world, of Adam, of paradise, and the prohibition, all depended upon the wise determination and Almighty power of God; and that the act of disobedience depended upon the voluntary conduct of our first parents, who unnecessarily listened to the voice of the tempter, and willingly partook of the prohibited fruit. Both events were certainly seen in futurity, but their certainty depended upon very different agents, and very different circumstances. The one was made certain by a determination of God: the other was made certain by the determination of man, a free moral agent. I think I see a perfect harmony between the certainty of such events as certainly depend upon the voluntary conduct of man, and his free agency and just responsibility: but I cannot see any harmony between those events which depend upon the almighty power of God for their certainty, and free moral agency. The treachery of Judas, for instance, according to Mr. W. was made certain by an eternal decree, ages before he was born, and he was born for that very end; he could no more have resisted the influence of God's exciting agency, than he could reverse the immutable laws of

heaven and earth—how then could he have been responsible for his traitorous conduct? There is, not only no harmony between these two propositions, but they are directly at variance: their opposition is so manifest, that it amounts to a self-evident absurdity; at least, it appears so to us. If we are mistaken, we shall be thankful to any one who will rectify our mistake.

If these arguments will furnish Mr. W. with means to reconcile his doctrine of universal divine influence, with man's free agency and responsibility, he is perfectly welcome to them. But, if he use them, he must apply them lawfully. Let his image of decrees stand upon all its legs. *God works all things—All his acts are holy—He is the efficient cause of sin—Sin works for good—Christ died for the reprobates—But without any intention of saving them.* Although they fulfil the counsel of God's will, and are irresistibly compelled by force of the decree to all the sinful acts of their life, they must nevertheless be *damned eternally* for those sins which they *might have avoided*, notwithstanding they *must unavoidably fill up the measure of their iniquities*. I say, if all those features of his image are fairly exhibited, and if the arguments which we use to reconcile a rational responsibility with prescience, will also reconcile his frightful doctrine with such responsibility, he is perfectly welcome to them. It is presumed, however, that they will be found too narrow to hide all its enormities, and too short to cover all its deformities. Notwithstanding all his ingenuity, I believe every attentive beholder may read *injustice* on that side from whence unconditional reprobation proceeds; and *cruelty* from whence the decree to produce moral evil, and then to punish those who are the passive instruments of it, proceeds. If his doctrine be not justly chargeable with these two de-

fектs, it is because we have always entertained incorrect notions of justice and goodness ; for, we have always thought that it is *unjust* to punish a man for what he could not avoid, and *cruel* to hold out offers of mercy, when it is never intended to bestow any. But according to Mr. W. God offers mercy to the reprobates, although Christ had no intention of saving them when he died for them.

To avoid the absurdity of his doctrine, respecting God's having decreed what he has forbidden, and as having brought to pass, that in which he hath no pleasure, Mr. W. observes, p. 32. "It is thought by some to be totally inconsistent, that God should be represented as hardening the hearts of men by an efficient operation, and at the same time be displeased with them for that hardness. But is it not just as difficult to understand how he should create a clean heart in us, by an efficient operation, and still be pleased with this clean heart?" To have made the case parallel he should have asked ; — Is it not as difficult to understand how he could have created a clean heart, and be *displeased* with it ? For the present paradox is, how can the Lord be *displeased* with the work of his *own hands* ; and not whether he can be *pleased* with his own work. If God have decreed, and if he bring to pass all things, how is it that he is *displeased* with those things ? The scriptures plainly assert that there are many things, in which he hath *no pleasure*, which are an *abomination* to him ; but Calvinism asserts that *all things* are according to the counsel of his will, and according to his pleasure. Here then, Calvinism is at open war with the scriptures of truth. There is a palpable contradiction : therefore one or the other must be false. — Reader, which will you believe ? The Holy Scriptures which were given by inspiration of God, and which came sanctioned with all the authority of an independent

being? or Mr. W. many parts of whose production scarcely deserve the name of reasoning, which are in direct hostility to common sense, to the word of God, and above all, to Mr. W. himself? Can you hesitate which to believe? Believe them both you cannot. Moreover, God declares he hath no *pleasure* in wickedness, neither for its own sake, nor on account of its utility; but he delighteth in righteousness for its own sake, it being a copy of his own image, and also on account of its beneficial effects, wherever its influence is felt. Therefore, allowing that the sinner receives his sinfulness immediately from God, as the saint does his righteousness, still the word of God must be adhered to, which saith, *Thou takest no pleasure in wickedness.* But it is nowhere said in scripture, neither is it supported by rational argument, that the sinner receives his sinfulness from God. He is infinitely holy; and no unholiness can proceed from him. If Mr. W. will refer us to any text of scripture, or to any correct reasoning which will prove that God makes a man *holy*, and is then *displeased* with him, he will have established a principle from which his conclusion may be drawn. Perhaps, if he publish again, we shall be favoured with some reasoning, which will induce us to believe, That God is *pleased* with *holiness* because he made the sinner *holy*; therefore he is *pleased* with *sinfulness*, although he made the sinner *sinful*. But what did I say? We need not wait until he publish again for a similar process of reasoning. For, to bring his irrational argument into a narrow compass, it will stand thus: God creates a clean heart in us, with which he is pleased; therefore he makes the sinner's heart hard, with which he is displeased. If the reader cannot see any connection between the last and first proposition, perhaps it is because he has not yet been to those theological seminaries, where the art of rea-

soning is taught so as to accommodate itself to Hopkinsian theology. For my part, who have never had these scholastic advantages, I may be excused for not perceiving the conclusiveness of such arguments. Be that as it may, Mr. W. thinks the argument sound; for he says it "will have force with those who believe the divine efficiency is employed in causing *holiness* in our hearts." p. 32. I feel some reluctance in being proscribed by so orthodox a gentleman as Mr. W. but if the feeling no force in his argument must be taken as conclusive evidence of my unbelief in the divine efficiency in the production of holiness, I must submit to the classification to which he has assigned me; for certainly I can perceive no more connection between his premises and conclusion, than I can between the following:—Mr. W. is much *pleased* with his vindication, because it is his own production; therefore he must have been the author of my letters to him, with which he is much displeased. I hope, however, that the reader will not impute this bad reasoning to any want of intellect, but to the badness of the cause Mr. W. has volunteered to support: great allowance should be made for a man in captivity, even if his captivity be the effect of his own choice. He may be tempted to do things he would otherwise despise. And when a man is so unfortunate as to fall between irresistible decrees and free moral agency, which are at perpetual variance, we need not be surprised, if, by their continual rubbing, his intellectual strength becomes somewhat impaired.

It would appear, that, according to the theory adopted by Mr. W. an action is not sinful, because it is wrong in itself; that is, contrary to those immutable laws which mark the boundaries of moral conduct, and which discriminate, with infinite precision, the principles of truth and error, justice and

injustice; but its moral turpitude is to be inferred from the agent by whom it is produced. This I infer from what he has said in p. 24. note. "As far as men are said to do any thing towards forming a wicked character, it is meant that they take the part of wickedness"—"But nothing like this is intended, when the Divine being is said to form evil characters." It is true, circumstances may sanctify an action, which, under different circumstances, would be highly criminal. Such, for instance, as have been mentioned, respecting punishing the wicked, when they choose to be wicked, in preference to being righteous. The judge may pass sentence of condemnation upon a criminal, and order the penalty of the law executed upon him; when, if he had condemned an innocent man he would have been guilty of an act of flagrant injustice. But, when a law, just in its demands, is transgressed, the act is wrong, let the agent be who he may. And the doctrine now opposed represents God as exciting and efficiently influencing men to violate those just and holy laws, which emanated from his own infinite mind. It represents him as determining, planning, and *purposing in himself* to deviate from those very laws, which are as eternal and immutable as the Being from whom they proceeded; for that doctrine saith, That God worketh *all things*. If therefore any thing is worked contrary to those laws, He worketh it. It saith God's *decrees* and *commands* are *opposed*; and that his decrees are the rule by which he regulates his own conduct: He, therefore, opposeth his own commandments: He, by his exciting agency, makes the hearts of sinners *hard*, forms their character *wicked*, and *influences* them to violate his holy commandments. And, to vindicate this doctrine from referring wickedness to God, Mr. W. resorts to the above distinction. Now, we think *wickedness* is

wickedness, wherever it is found. It is wickedness, because it is wrong in itself: because it is contrary to the principles of eternal rectitude, inconsistent with the immutable fitness and nature of things. And we know of no other correct method of ascertaining the character of any act, but by bringing it to the principles of eternal truth and righteousness; and if it be opposed to these principles, it is radically defective; it is highly criminal. But according to Mr. Williston's system, we have only to enquire from whence the action proceeded, to ascertain its character. We know, indeed, that God cannot do any thing wrong; and therefore, when we examine the character of an action, and find it to possess the marks of wickedness, we immediately conclude that God, who is infinitely removed from every thing unholy, could not have been the author of that action, or of that wicked character. But, if Mr. W.'s system be adopted, it is no proof that such a character was not formed by God, because it is wicked; for, according to him, the wicked are as much dependent on God for their sinful character, as the righteous are for their holy character. And if we may infer the righteousness of God's character, because of the righteousness of his ways, from his having created men and angels in his own image of *righteousness and true holiness*, why might we not infer that he is unrighteous if he make men wicked? It appears to us that, if the reference is fairly drawn from the one principle, it may also be from the other. We are willing to submit the correctness of this reasoning to an enlightened public, whose candour will lead them to make an impartial decision. If a bad machine be made, we do not stop to enquire after the name of its maker to ascertain his character; but we instantly conclude, that, whoever he may be, he is deficient, either in wisdom, or power, or goodness.

And this decision is the result of the dictates of common sense. So, in the moral world, if we have indubitable evidence that any wickedness or unholiness is brought to pass, we immediately conclude a wicked agent has been at work. Not so, says Mr. W. "for God is represented as having a design and agency in forming the characters of his" (sinful) "creatures." If this be fact, we need no longer infer the existence and agency of the devil, nor of sinners, when sinful characters are formed, and wicked actions are performed. God, according to this theory, is the only active and responsible agent in the universe. Such doctrines shock us. They seem to us to carry absurdity upon the very face of them. How they can be believed is difficult even to conceive. To attempt a serious and formal refutation of them, seems as needless as it would to attempt to prove that the man who commits murder is a wicked man. But when such absurdities are asserted, and gravely attempted to be proved by gentlemen professing to be Christian ministers, it gives such a sanction to them, as to demand some kind of exposure. That which comes to us recommended by the signature of religion, and especially the Christian religion, wears such a sacred character, has such an imposing aspect, as to challenge belief almost without examination.— And we are naturally, or superstitiously inclined to bow before it, with a sort of reverence. On this account, it becomes the more necessary to expose errors which are sanctified by such high authority. The more important the subject, and the more sacred its character, the more patient should be our investigation, and the more minute and circumspect our examination. These serious considerations have induced us to submit to the otherwise disagreeable labour of following Mr. W. in his strange, and to us, inconsistent doctrines. And we hope

this will be a sufficient apology for detaining the reader so long in this field of controversy. We have found so many briars of error, so many thorns of absurdities, and so many impassable gulphs of deep and incredible mysteries, that we could not pass along without attempting to remove these serious impediments out of the way.

To avoid such necessary consequences of his doctrine, Mr. W. has denied the truth of the axiom, that an *effect partakes of the moral likeness of its cause*. Hear his remarks upon this subject: "It must be an *intelligent* being to produce *unintelligent* and inert matter. Here the effect does not at all partake of the nature of the cause. So a *holy* being may form one that is *unholy*." p. 256. In regard to the *unintelligent* part of the creation, neither morality nor immorality is predicable of it; but according to Moses, whose authority in this instance will not be invalidated by any thing, Mr. W. can say, this part of the creation was *good*; and it received the approbation of its Creator, as well as the intelligent part. The goodness therefore, as well as the power and wisdom of the Creator, is inferable from the goodness of the unintelligent part of his work, it being as manifest an evidence of his perfection, as was the intelligent. We do not, indeed, suppose that it possessed *moral* goodness; but that kind of goodness which may be affirmed of any thing which perfectly answers its end. And if this part of the Creation had been so defective as not to have answered the end of its creation and formation, as not to have been adapted to the place it was designed to occupy, that defect would have been an evidence of the want, either of wisdom, power, or goodness in the Creator. In this sense then the maxim holds good, that an effect must partake of the likeness of the cause.

We apply this maxim, and act upon it daily.—

Were a mechanic to make a machine, say a watch, that did not answer its end, that did not keep regular time, we immediately infer, and very justly too, either, that the watch is not as it was made, or that its maker was deficient in knowledge, power, or goodness. And if it be ascertained that his watches are all of this character, he is pronounced unfit for his calling. This mode of ascertaining the perfection or imperfection of a cause, or an author, is universally adopted. Indeed, we have no other correct method of ascertaining the character of an author, maker, or cause, than by inferring it from the production, formation, or effects, which we behold resulting from them. I believe Mr. Hume, the infidel philosopher, was the first man that ever called the truth of this maxim in question. And were it discarded, we can have no criterion to distinguish between a wise man and a fool, between a powerful and a weak, a good and a bad cause.

Let us now apply it to those things of which morality may be predicated. Here is a foolish, weak, and wicked action performed. Who is the author of it? We say, according to the above axiom, it is not God, because he is possessed of those perfections which preclude the possibility of his being the author of a foolish, weak, and wicked act. Deny the truth of the axiom, and then you may indeed infer that God is the author of such an act. But here is a wise, powerful, and righteous action. Who is its author? If the truth of the axiom be not admitted, you may infer that the devil is the author of a wise, powerful and righteous action: but admit its truth, and the devil is excluded, and the action is ascribed to God; because, a good moral agent, unless it *abuses* its agency, must produce a good moral action. The same reasoning will conduct us to the fountain of all those actions which are the result of free moral human agents.

Here is an act of wickedness, say intentional murder ; we immediately, and, I think most justly infer, that a wicked agent has been at work. Nay ; but according to Mr. W. who denies the justness of the axiom, we have no right to infer any such thing. It may have been done by a good moral agent ! Here, is a good moral action, say an act of benevolence, of meekness, of goodness ; we immediately infer that a good moral agent has been at work. O no ; according to Mr. W. This may have been done by a bad, avaricious, haughty, wicked man. See how truth and error are blended together in this scheme.

Moreover, if this maxim be rejected as false, we have no right to infer that the world was created by a wise, powerful, and good being. If there be no resemblance between the effect produced, and the agent that produced it, the world, in its original perfection, may have resulted from a weak, wicked and foolish being ! And how then, does Mr. W. know, but that the devil created the world ? If we may not infer the character of the agent from the effects which are produced, how does he know but that the devil is the primary cause of all good, and God the primary cause of all evil ? To what desperate assaults upon truth are men driven to support a favourite hypothesis. Thus, Mr. W. to support his doctrine of universal decrees, is driven to deny one of the most evident axioms in science ; one that has been admitted by all reflecting men, (some infidels excepted) in every age of the world ; and an axiom too, which, if rejected, leaves us no data to distinguish between truth and error, between God and the Devil, between good and bad men, or between righteous and unrighteous actions. Destroy this axiom, and the judge has no just criterion to guide his mind in deciding upon any criminal case which may come before him. He has no

right to infer that a man is a murderer, because intentional murder is proved against him ; the man, according to Mr. W. may have had a " holy end in view," p. 256. Alas, alas ! that ever such dangerous sentiments should have issued from the press. It is well for mankind that the power of truth prevents the practical influence of such erroneous principles.

It was asked, How does Mr. W. know, upon his principles, but that God is the primary cause of all evil ? Indeed he does not scruple to affirm this.— And if God be the primary cause of all evil, where does good come from ? From the Devil ? No, God is the cause of all the good too ? So says Mr. W. Jeremiah, however, will contradict him ; *Out of the mouth of the Most High proceedeth not evil and good.* And so also will the proverb of the ancients, *Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked,* 1 Sam. xxiv. 13. It seems that the axiom, that an effect partakes of the moral likeness of its cause, was well known in the days of king David ; and had been handed down from "the ancients," in what was then called a *proverb*, and is now called an axiom. *Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked.* But Mr. W. affirms that wicked characters are formed by the hand of God. And if the proverb of the ancients is true, and Mr. W.'s doctrine be also true, then it follows that God is wicked ! See how this dreadful doctrine represents the God of immaculate purity.

To avoid, however, these blasphemous consequences, Mr. W. introduces a curious distinction, between *efficient* and *fontal* cause. He says God is the *efficient*, but not the *fontal* cause of sin ; and he says also he is confident that *fontal* is a word not of his "own coining," because it comes from the "Latin substantive, *fons* or *fontis*, a fountain"— "God is not literally, the fountain, whence the

water flows. So God is the efficient cause of the volitions, which are now flowing out of my heart" — "and yet it would be improper to say, that he is the *fontal* cause of these volitions," &c. p. 257. This distinction, and these observations, are as novel, as they are useless in obviating the difficulties with which his system is encumbered.

In what sense does he suppose that God is the cause of the water's flowing? Why, says he, "God is the efficient, or effectuating cause of water's flowing from a spring; and yet God is not the fountain." Well then, he is not the *fontal* cause of the flowing of water; he is the *efficient* cause only. Is he the *fontal* cause of man's volitions. No; for says Mr. W. "They flow from *my* heart, as their proper source or fountain; but they do not flow forth from the heart of God." Well then, God is neither the *fontal* cause of *natural* or *moral* motion; neither the *fontal* source of the flowing of water, nor of the flowing of volitions: that is, he is not the *fontal* cause of *any thing*: hence it is, according to Mr. W. highly improper to make him the *fontal* or fountain of *any thing*. And if he be the *fontal* cause of nothing, why apply this expression to him? Did Mr. W. introduce this novel distinction to make it appear that God is the *fontal* cause of *nothing*? This to be sure, will prove to admiration that there is no likeness between cause and effect! for, I believe that there is not much resemblance between a *fountain* and *nothing*. Although therefore, he has not coined the word, I believe he has coined the application of it to God in the way he has, by making him the *fontal* cause of nothing.

If it be proper to apply this word, *fontal*, to God at all, to represent him as the *fountain* from whence the existence of all things flowed, as from an original cause, it must, I think, be used figuratively;

for no one, it is presumed, concludes that God is, literally, a fountain of water. And yet he is represented as the fountain, or 'great first cause' of original existence, the fountain of blessedness, the fountain of power, wisdom, justice, goodness, holiness, and truth. Understanding the word in a figurative sense, when applied to God, where is the difference between his being the *fontal* and *efficient* cause of sin? *Efficient* comes from the Latin *efficiens*, which signifies to *bring to pass*, a *power to effect*, *effecting*, and *making*. And if, when fountain is applied figuratively to God, it signifies, as it undoubtedly does, his being the original cause, the producer and effecter of all things, (moral evil excepted) is it not precisely the same as to say he is the efficient cause of all things? For our part we can see no difference: neither can we perceive that Mr. W. has made any difference. He says God is not a literal fountain of water, although he make the water to flow: He is not literally the *fontal* cause of the water's flowing; but yet, he is the *effectuating* cause of its flowing. He is not, says Mr. W. literally the *fontal* cause of man's volitions, but he is the *effectuating* cause of his volitions. Therefore, does not every reader perceive, that God is the cause of man's volitions in the same sense that he is the cause of the flowing of water? Now if he make the water flow muddy, and overflow in its course meadows, cornfields, &c. sweeping away in its rapid torrent all the produce of the earth; is not God the efficient or *fontal* cause of all that muddiness, and all that devastation? And if he make the human heart sinful by an efficient operation, and set the volition of the mind in motion, so that the sinner, like *Jereboam* of old, *who made Israel to sin*, commits rapine and murder, and every other abomination; is not God the effectuating cause, or fountain of all these abominations? An *efficient*

cause is that which immediately produces or makes a thing *as it is*. Thus God was the efficient cause of the creation. It was so because he made it so : He was its author. And if he be the efficient cause of sin, he makes sin as it is ; gives it its hateful character : He is its author, in every sense of the word : He is the figurative fountain, or *fontal* cause from whence it proceeds. Nay ; but "They flow forth from *my* heart." Yes ; but who put them into *your* heart ? Answer ; "He *worketh* in me to will, therefore I say He is the *efficient* cause of my volitions," p. 257. And suppose you will to commit adultery, or murder, or to steal, or to lie ? Does God *work* by an *efficient* operation to produce these sinful volitions ? Yes ; "but as these volitions exist only in my heart, and not in his, I would say, that God is not the *fontal*, though he is the *efficient* cause of my volitions," ibid. I have already shewn that the distinction between *fontal* and *efficient* cause, is in name only ; and therefore it follows, from these words of Mr. W. that God is the original source, the proper author, and the present efficient cause of all the sinful volitions of adulterers, liars, thieves, and murderers. "He *worketh* in me to will," says Mr. W. If therefore the adulterer *will* to commit adultery, God *works* in him to will : and as all men generally *desire* whatever they *will to do*, God *works* the desire, produces it in the heart by an efficient operation, inclines the mind to will it, and impels to the actual commission of the crime ; and yet, according to Mr. W. God is not the author of sin ! I think it needless to pursue this argument any further, because I am fully persuaded that every impartial reader will perceive that Mr. W's distinction between *fontal* and *efficient* cause, is peurile, that it does not answer the end of its author, nor obviate the difficulty with which his scheme is embarrassed.

Another argument Mr. W. uses, to prove that an effect does not partake of the likeness of its cause, is "God the Creator made all kinds of animals, the noxious and poisonous, as well as the harmless and useful: but we do not think of inferring thence, that the Creator is possessed of all those qualities," p. 31. He seems to forget, while arguing upon this point, what he so strenuously contends for in other places, namely, "the entire depravity of the human race." While referring to the vegetable and animal kingdoms under this head, he founds all his arguments on the original perfection of the creation. Has he forgotten that the earth was cursed on account of sin? Or does he suppose that snakes and toads, and other noxious and poisonous animals, and poisonous vegetables, were created with all their destructive qualities? He contradistinguishes these noxious and poisonous things, from those that are "harmless and useful." Does he mean to insinuate by this, that God created some things in the *six days*, that were not only useless, but destructive? What were they to destroy by their poisonous qualities, when the whole creation was stamp'd with superlative beauty and perfection, and placed in an incorruptible state? Were these noxious and poisonous animals *all very good*? If so, they may be ranked with sin, almost! Or, does he suppose these destructive animals and vegetables were afterwards created by the Almighty, and incorporated with sin, for the benefit—of the elect, or reprobates? Indeed, if God be the efficient cause of sin, he might also be the efficient cause of all the noxious and poisonous qualities of snakes, toads, spiders, &c. &c. But, as none of these hurtful qualities existed before the introduction of moral evil, and therefore were not created by the Almighty, they cannot be improved into an objection against the genuine maxim, that an effect partakes of the

likeness of the cause. The great first cause of universal existence was infinitely wise and *good*; and hence Moses has declared, that, when the work of creation was finished, it was ALL VERY GOOD.—The effect was superlatively good, because the cause was infinitely so—hence the axiom is good also. But, says Mr. W. God “hardened the heart of Pharaoh: but the hardening act in God was not hardness, any more than though it had been a softening act,” p. 31. Be it so. The Smith hardens his metals; but the hardening act in him is not hardness; but it is an act for which the Smith alone is responsible. And should we despise, or pity, the man who should make any thing hard with design, by his own efficient operation, and then find fault with it for being hard? and finally, to show his power over it, should prefer an accusation against it, procure sentence of condemnation, and dash it to pieces? Would he thereby manifest folly? or ignorance? or wickedness? By condemning the machine, would he not condemn himself? And does not the doctrine which represents God as hardening Pharaoh by an efficient operation, as forming his character wicked according to God’s own pleasure; and then complaining of him for being so, and dashing him to pieces on account of his hardness; I say, does not this doctrine impute some capital defect to God’s sacred character?

The potter forms his vessels upon the wheel, and through the instrumentality of fire, hardens them: but we do not suppose that the potter is either clay, or fire, or an earthen vessel; but if the vessel be bad, unfit for use, we infer that there was some deficiency of wisdom or goodness in the potter, or some defect in his materials, or his instruments of operation. And if these materials were also of his own making, the fault is still justly attributable to him, and him alone. So also if God form wicked

characters, and if any of them are defective, He alone is responsible for the defect. Mr. W's remarks, therefore, do not help his cause any.

But says Mr. W. "Our opponents can no more get along than we can, without frequently making a distinction between God's taking pleasure in things for their own sake, and taking pleasure in the good which they are the means of effecting." p. 33.— All this is granted. But it is nothing in favour of his principle. We know, as he hath remarked in respect to God's *chastening* his people, that 'he doeth it for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.' But what has this to do with his doctrine, which saith that God formeth wicked characters, in which he has solemnly declared he hath *no pleasure*? Is this act, by which God chastises his children, a sinful act? Or has he any where said that he hath no pleasure in *holiness*. The chastisement of which the Apostle speaks, was the corrections of our Heavenly Father, designed for our good, which is not a sinful act; and in which he does not take pleasure on its own account, or on account of the pain inflicted, but on account of the holiness it is design'd to produce. Moreover, this chastening is the correction of the benevolent Father of our spirits, because of our disobedience, that we may *learn obedience by the things we suffer*. It is not therefore sinful, but a righteous correcting of our heavenly Father, and is substantial proof that God does not take pleasure in unrighteousness; for so *displeasing* is it to him, that he finds it necessary to use the rod, which otherwise he would not, to scourge us for our disobedience. But, how inconsistent would it be to infer from these facts, that God first *made* us, and *appointed* us to *disobedience*, that he might have an opportunity to *chastise* us *for that* disobedience: Were a human Father to do so by his children; that is, first contrive,

and plan, and influence his children to rebel, and declare that their rebellion was according to his pleasure, and then chastise them with the rod of correction for being rebellious, I think his *inhumanity* would be manifest to all impartial judges. St. Paul saith, Heb. xii. 11. ‘Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them which are exercised thereby.’ But will Mr. W. say that those reprobates, whose wicked characters are formed by the hand of God, are chastened for *their good*, and that it afterwards yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them? Is the being devoted to sin, and eternal damnation by an efficient decree of preterition for *their good*, as well as the “good of the community at large?” Instead of its yielding the peaceable fruits of righteousness, it produces the quarrelsome fruits of wickedness, which end in everlasting destruction. So little to his purpose is this scriptural and rational distinction which we make.

But Mr. W. objects to my illustration in page 19 of my first letter, by introducing the judge: because “It is no part of the work of a human judge to create rational beings, and form their characters.” p. 24. note. We know it is not. But we may *suppose* such a circumstance for the purpose of illustration. I know the unconditional decretists do not approve of such illustrations, because they carry light into their temple of error and confusion. *Were* a human judge to do, as God is represented by Mr. W. as doing, I believe he would be universally condemned, because his conduct would have been radically and essentially wrong. As before stated, we ascertain the *morality* or *immorality* of an action from its *consonance* or *disonance*, to the principles of eternal truth and righteousness, and

not from the agent who is the author of that action. I think, therefore, and without any anxiety I am willing my readers should determine upon the correctness of the thought, that *that* illustration is pertinent, and sets Hopkinsian theology in a just point of light. If one could believe for a moment, that God makes a wicked character, by foreordaining and influencing him to wickedness, by an efficient operation upon his heart, and that heart is in all respects just as God would have it; it is impossible for any man to vindicate, (upon any notions we have formed of justice,) the justice of God in the final and perpetual condemnation of such a character. If it can be done, it will then have been proved that all our perceptions of justice and injustice have been erroneous. Justice, goodness and wisdom, are the same in God as they are in man; only they exist in the former to an infinite degree: Otherwise we have no perceptions at all, of divine wisdom, justice and goodness; for all the perceptions we have of the divine attributes are taken from their miniature resemblance, which God originally stamped upon his moral picture, man. And in whatever degree the traces of this image have become obscured by the fall, they are revealed to us in the sacred scripture, and by the light of the Holy Spirit. In the scriptures we are taught, ‘That it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not.’ And the perceptions we have of justice are, that a man is not to be condemned for what he could not avoid.— This maxim appears as evident as any mathematical demonstration. Let us try Mr. W’s. principle by it. Here stands an unholy man before the tribunal. The sentence of condemnation is passed upon him—For what? for having had a sinful character. How came he by that character? Mr. W’s. doctrine answers, God gave it to him. He from

all eternity decreed that this man should be born for this very end ; and that the object of this decree might be effected, God excited and influenced by an efficient operation, this poor despised reprobate to sin. Could he have avoided it ? If it be said yes, then irresistible decrees are given up. If it be said no, then it is affirmed that this man is damned forever for doing what he could no more have avoided, than he could dethrone the Almighty. Now, if this doctrine does not impute *injustice*, nay *cruelty* to God, then I say we know not what injustice and cruelty are. And we may totally despair of ever perceiving any distinction between justice and injustice, or between goodness and cruelty. And as this is the view which the illustration alluded to, was designed to give of Mr. W.'s doctrine, I think it answered the end for which it was introduced.

In p. p. 22. 23 of my letters, I observed, that God not only saw what *would be*, but also all that *might have been*. Mr. W. quotes this passage, and, after some remarks, he asks "Why did not the might-be events exist ? For an illustration ;—God saw that the earth might have had two moons instead of one ; but he saw that it would actually have but one. But what was there to make the latter certain, while the other only might have been ?"

The reader is desired to notice the apparent efforts of my antagonist to evade the real merits of the question. He must certainly have known, that there was no dispute between us, respecting those events which depended entirely upon the good pleasure and power of God for their existence. These we know, God determined should exist, and exist too, at the time, place, and in the manner they did : and we also admit, that God knew that they would exist only because he determined they should ; for their existence depended entirely upon his will and

pleasure ; and *therefore* they were brought into existence *perfect*, all bearing distinctive marks of the wisdom, power, and goodness of their Adorable Creator. But pray tell us, ye that are sharp sighted enough to see a consistency between universal and irresistible divine influence and human responsibility, what has the original perfection of the creation to do with moral evil ? Was that created among other things, in the *six days* work ? Did that drop perfect from the Creator ? and was it also pronounced *very good* ? I believe moral evil was never pronounced *good* (if we except Satan's address to Eve the mother of all living) until some thousands of years after the creation ? Was not Dr. Hopkins the first author of that benediction on moral evil ? Perhaps his followers may think he deserves immortal honour, for eulogizing sin ! But, " Why did not *the might-be* events actually exist ? " Answer, because they depended upon *might-be's* for their existence. I mean upon the free volitions of men and Angels. They decreed, ordained and chose that they should not exist ; and by their free moral agency prevented their coming into existence. Thus, the fallen Angels might have continued holy as they were when created ; but they decreed to do, and actually did otherwise. Adam and Eve might have continued in the garden of pleasure where their Creator placed them ; but they decreed to do, and actually did otherwise. Sinners, who continue obstinate in their sins, might have repented, believed in Christ, and have been saved ; but they decreed not to do so, and by their own voluntary conduct their decree was effected. Is it said that, according to this statement, all those contingent events failed, merely because they were dependent upon the volitions of men ? To obviate this objection, let it be observed, that there are events, which *might not* have come to pass, and yet, because their existence de-

pended upon the choice and actions of men, they did actually happen. Thus, Adam *might not* have sinned ; but as this sinful event depended upon his volition for its existence, it was, contrary to the express command of God, effected : Judas *might not* have betrayed the Lord Jesus into the hands of his enemies ; but as that event depended upon the free choice and voluntary conduct of Judas, it was effected in open violation of God's express command,—‘*Reverence my son.*’ The same observations will apply with equal truth, to every sinful event, that ever did, or ever will take place : their existence depending upon the determinations of free agents they were effected by the voluntary agency of men and devils in direct opposition to the decree, law, and will of God : *therefore*, these voluntary agents are justly punishable for all those sinful events. But, according to Mr. W. all these wicked events resulted from a previous determination, and a present exciting agency of God. Does not this doctrine completely exculpate every man, however wicked, from criminality ? If it do not, we must confess ourselves unable to perceive any connection between moral obligation and human responsibility : for, if we be responsible for God's original intentions, which existed before the world was made, we may, with equal propriety, be responsible, for not “*creating two moons !*”

I wish this question might be pressed upon the reader's understanding. All events which now transpire in the moral world, whether they be good or bad, rational or irrational, are in perfect conformity to the original determinations of God, and are brought into existence by a divine efficient influence,—so says Mr. W.—and yet for these events, he says, we are accountable. Now, I ask, can any man perceive any reason why he should be responsible for the necessary effects of determinations with

which he had no more to do, and over which he had no more control, than he had over the creation of the world? We confess our entire incapacity to perceive any reason whatever. And therefore we conclude that those who believe in that doctrine, lay aside their rationality, and impose upon themselves and others. Here again, we are brought to behold a palpable absurdity on the face of that doctrine which makes man responsible for the accomplishment of purposes, which were formed before he was born, and which are irresistibly effected by an influence over which man never had, nor could possibly have, any kind of control. What becomes of justice? What of goodness? Are they not totally obscured by this thick mist of Hopkinsian theology? And so totally obscured, that the eye of reason, or of faith, or any other principle with which the human mind is acquainted, cannot see either the one or the other of these adorable attributes.

Let us, however, attend to his illustration—"God saw there might have been two moons instead of one." This subject is too serious, or we should be disposed to smile at this observation. However, I very much doubt, whether God ever saw there might have been two moons. Did not the existence of the moon depend entirely upon the pleasure of God? And could there have been two, unless he had determined to create them? But did he determine to create them? To say he did, is to say that he altered his determination. To say he did not, is to say that there *might not* have been two; unless we suppose this *might have been* event could have caused its own existence. All therefore Mr. W. has said upon this subject, I consider a mere quibbling attempt to avoid the insuperable difficulties with which his scheme is embarrassed.

In p. p. 40, 41. Mr. W. quotes the following sentence from my book;—‘If every event which

comes to pass is brought to pass by God's plan, &c. then there can be no event however trivial in itself, &c.'—and then asks, " Does not the objector see a great many *trivial things*, as he would call them, in the creation ? And yet one and the same God, created the heavens, and the earth, and all the host of them." To the question it is answered, that we not only see a great many *trivial* things, but also many *noxious*, *wicked*, and *foolish* things in the world, which it is both scriptural and reasonable to conclude, were not created by the Almighty, and which, therefore, had no existence while the world remained in its pristine purity and glory.—The earth itself was cursed on account of the first transgression ; and this was part of the awful malediction—'Cursed is the ground for thy sake ; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life : Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee.' Gen. iii. 17, 18. From these solemn words, we are justified in concluding, that there are many things, even in the vegetable kingdom, of a noxious quality, which would have been forever excluded, had they not been introduced as a consequence of moral evil. Our seeing these things *now*, is no evidence that they *originally* existed. Out of mercy to his cause, it was exceedingly wise in Mr. W. to end the quotation from my book as he did, at the word *trivial*.\* That the reader may determine

\* Mr. W. it is true, in p. 30. quotes this passage at full length ; but his observations by no means meet its force. Nay, he is under the necessity of admitting its conclusiveness in the manner of his reply ; " If," says he, " by an unholy effect be meant an unholy volition, that is, an unholy exercise of the will, it surely proves that there is an unholy heart from whence it proceeds." Now how shall we ascertain whether a volition be holy or unholy, but by the effects which are produced by that volition ? If we perceive murder, and other wicked effects produced by a willing mind, must we not conclude that the volitions of that mind were wicked ? And Mr. W. says that all kinds of wickedness is effected by the efficient mind of God,

whether it was from fear of the argument, and a sense of his *moral inability* to encounter it with success, or not, I will present it to him as it stands in the letter, p. 15. ‘If every event which comes to pass, is brought to pass by God’s plan, as you call it, or is an effect of his decree, then there can be no event, however trivial in itself, however wicked, foolish and inconsistent, but what is included in this plan, which you ascribe to God, and which, according to your statement, is the effect of his uncontrollable decree. If this system does not ascribe wickedness, foolishness, and absurdity to God, there are no such things as wickedness, foolishness, and absurdity in the world.’ Now, Mr. W. instead of looking this argument in the face, and encountering it with scriptural and rational weapons, hangs upon the word *trivial*, and makes a great ado about what he calls *trivial* things, such as a “glow-worm,” “fishes,” “insects,” “hyssop;” and even

As there was a time when no unholiness existed, and if all things flow from God as their efficient cause, then the first unholiness must have been produced by the Almighty—of course, that volition which produced this unholiness must have been an unholiness volition, and also “an unholiness heart from whence it proceeds.” So conclusively does his doctrine metamorphose the *Holy one of Israel* into a bloody Moloch, by representing him as first *willing* the sinfulness of men and angels, and then as tormenting them in hell-fire forever, for having yielded to the impulse of His secret working upon their hearts.

Taking for granted that God is immutably holy, Mr. W. concludes it impossible that he can be guilty of any unholiness volition. This is, to be sure, accurate enough. But it by no means alters the tendency of his doctrine: and it is an undeniable evidence that the doctrine is false. If I were to assert that my antagonist is a *good* man, and in the next breath were to say he *willed* and *contrived*, and *actually effected* all the wickedness that ever took place in Durham; would not every deliberate man suppose I meant to satarize him, by calling him *good*? or otherwise, that I had falsified his character by saying he had been guilty of all those evils? But if I persist in maintaining my last position, and actually prove it, would any man think it was sufficient to vindicate the goodness of Mr. W.’s character, merely by saying he who is so *good* must have had a “*holy end in view*” in contriving and effecting so much wickedness?

while speaking of these, his observations all have reference to their having been created. I am almost weary with repeating, that his so frequent reference to the original perfection of the creation, has no kind of bearing on the present controversy. We are not arraigning divine wisdom in the creation, and first formation of the universe. No trivial, nor no wicked, nor foolish thing then existed. Why did he not shew, if able, that the argument was inconclusive which charged his scheme with referring all wickedness, foolishness and absurdity to God? Is not the reason very obvious? Was he not incompetent? I think his inability is tacitly acknowledged by the oblique view he has taken of it.

I will now state those trivial things, and those wicked, foolish and absurd things, which were then on my mind. Look then at the little pranks of children, witnessed more or less in every family, their chit-chat, their play-things, their innocent mirth, &c. hear, (and if the ear is offended, blame not the author for writing these *trivial* things; for, if Mr. W. be correct they were all decreed and are brought about by the exciting agency of God;) hear, I say, the croaking of the frogs, the chattering of the geese, the hissing of the snake, &c. &c. See the whisking of the Spaniel's tale, the cunning mimickry of the ape, and a thousand other *trivial* things. I do not wish to offend the ear of delicacy, or many *trivial*, as well as *foolish* things might be mentioned, which, according to Mr. W. were not only decreed, but actually brought to pass, by the divine efficiency. But, listen to the *foolish*, obscene stories of the facetious drunkard over his bowl, and the unmeaning reveries of the enthusiastic courtier. See the turning and twisting of the merry dancer, and behold his feats of gallantry, couched under the darkness of night; the *foolish* airs, the disgusting gesticulations of a 'modern

man of fashion ;' the supercilious and haughty airs of the self-consequential fop ; the foolish mincing and apish grimacing of her who spends her days and nights in the ball chamber or at the theatre ; the gaudy, and in many instances, immodest adorning of the vain of every class and tribe, whether among the aborigines of America, the sons of Africa, or the daughters of Europe. All these *foolish* things, to say no worse of them, are effected, according to Mr. W. by a divine efficient operation, and, being " parts of the perfect plan," are perfectly pleasing to God. The *wicked* and horrid oaths of the bold blasphemer, the many drunken fits of the degraded sot, murder, debauchery ;—a shame to human nature that such foul crimes must be mentioned. If the cheek of modesty blushes at their recital, how degraded must those hardened wretches be, who, to elude the human eye, hide themselves under the curtain of night, while they perpetrate their horrid crimes ! Must they also have an antidote, by being told, that God, the God of infinite purity is the efficient cause of all these shameful abominations ? Surely this is sufficient to raise a flush of indignation upon the cheek of every one who feels for the honour and happiness of mankind. Secret assassinations, crimes sometimes sanctioned by public example.—Wars—O bleeding, suffering humanity ! Must the warrior's sword devour its thousands ? men, women and children, all fall before his revengeful arm ! while midnight revellings, sensual gratifications, and all kinds of intemperance devour their tens of thousands—until the groaning earth disgorging itself of its mighty load, throws them headlong to destruction. Are these *abominations which make desolate*, for the " good of the great whole" of the human family ? Say, Mr. Williston, are these devouring scourges, which drag after them plague and pestilence, and every ingredient of

human misery, *trivial* things ? Do they add to the amount of human felicity ? Do they help on the Redeemer's kingdom, and help to people the regions of perennial happiness ? Answer, Thou vindicator of the doctrines of the immortal reformation—Are these crimes brought about by the divine efficiency ? All perfectly agreeable to the divine mind ? And does God send these atrocious sinners to break his commandments ? Alas ! that ever such sentiments were promulgated by the pen of a reformed minister. After naming these crimes of a crimson hue, is it necessary also to mention the *absurdities* of error, of authors, of taunting infidels, of systems invented to give countenance to vice ? Must these also be imputed to the God of immutable truth, of unbounded goodness, and of inflexible justice ? *who hates all manner of iniquity, and abhors all lying lips.* The trembling pulse almost ceases to beat, at the recital of such injurious sentiments.

Here I would pause—if I could have any hope of success—and expostulate with Mr. Williston. I would ask, what good he can propose to himself in attributing all these abominations to God ? Is it not enough for the bold infidel, and the smooth tongued Socinian, to employ their pens in rendering Christianity odious, and in pouring contempt upon its sacred author ? Must Christian ministers help to confirm them in their unreasonable belief that our God is a *hard master*, that he requires impossibilities ; punishes his creatures for unavoidable actions ; makes them responsible for his own determinations ? Must they be informed from the professed believer in Christ, that the God of the Christians is an Almighty tyrant, ruling mankind with a resistless influence, and then, punishing and rewarding them, for being the passive instruments in fulfilling those immutable determinations, which were formed before man was made ? Must they be taught

to believe that our God is the author of lies, of absurdities, of foolishness ? Can their minds ever be brought to reverence and worship such a being ? Are not these the proper characteristics of Satan ? O truth ! O author of truth ! arise in the greatness of thy majesty ! Dispel the gloom. Let this long night of error be over and past. Let the radiant beams of thy uncreated glories, dart conviction to the hearts of mistaken men. Vindicate, O thou who dwellest between the cherubims ! vindicate thine own spotless throne, from the foul blots which the darkening planets of error have cast upon it.

But it is, I fear, needless to expostulate. Mr. Williston is a free moral agent, possessing a rational soul. And if he can deliberately close his eyes upon the light of revelation, reason, and the consistency and sacred harmony of truth, he alone is responsible for it. I cannot help, however, remarking, that if this part of his system be true, my Maker has denied me the power to perceive its truth ; and that, if my antagonist sees its consistency, he has a different soul from mine, or otherwise he must have a totally different medium of perception. But knowing that God hath made of one blood all the nations of the world ; that all have the same natures, similar powers of mind and body ; and, those who live under the light of the gospel, possess similar means of information, have the same common privileges of the sacred scriptures, the light of the Holy Spirit, and are under the government of an impartial God—I say, these things being considered, I believe it will appear evident to every impartial man, that Mr. W. closed his eyes against the most important point of my argument, and fixed his foot on *trivial*—to cover his retreat from the sword of truth, which he found himself incompetent to withstand. If, however, he thinks himself able, or if any of his brethren, will look it

in the face, and put it out of countenance, by fair scripture and rational argument, they shall have my thanks ; and they will, I apprehend, better deserve the thanks of their friends, than any of their predecessors in this controversy. Let no one think that this is vain boasting. I claim not the discovery of these truths. Those venerable leaders in this controversy have wrought so effectually in the mine of truth, and so accurately laid its golden treasures before us, that we have only to take them up and use them. Nay, the eternal Spirit himself has condescended in mercy to our weakness, to furnish us with the precious materials with which we are to erect and defend the temple of truth : and, that we may not fail in our undertaking, he still condescends to assist, by his dove-like operations, our mental powers, directs where to look, which to take, and where to incorporate it in the building. But, if our opponents will make wisdom and folly harmonize, righteousness and wickedness greet each other, absurdity and consistency unite ; and prove that they all flow from the same fountain of eternal wisdom, justice and truth, they will have done what no one else ever did. When they will vindicate the claims of eternal justice, in conformity to any correct perceptions we have of justice, in punishing those reprobates which Christ never had any intention of saving when he died for them, and who exactly fulfill the counsel of his will ; and shew the harmony of this divine attribute with uncreated goodness and truth, and with the benevolent economy of the Gospel, in conformity with their system of decrees, they will then have ushered into the moral world a flood of light to which it has always heretofore been a stranger ;—when this is done, this controversy shall end ; at least with me. And they are earnestly solicited to make the trial. The object is worthy of their attention. If we are not

totally deceived, and our heart does not accuse us of insincerity, we most ardently desire to know the truth. It has been the object of our pursuit for a long time. If they have the truth, why should we not embrace it? Certainly every prejudice, prepossession, and party feeling, ought to be sacrificed upon its holy altar.

3. We will now turn our attention to those sacred and venerable records of our salvation, to which we must ultimately appeal for a correct decision on all subjects of religious controversy.

But before we enter this golden mine of eternal truth, it seems expedient to stop, and obviate an objection of Mr. Williston's, which presents itself at the entrance, and threatens to impede our progress. Speaking of the author of the 'Errors of Hopkinsianism,' he says, p. 18. "He does not pretend to bring much direct proof from the Scriptures to shew that God has not a purpose about every event. He strives hard by learned criticisms, and other means, to invalidate our direct proof"—There is, "great want of direct proof against the decrees"—"therefore they choose to meet us in the field of *reason*, rather than in that of revelation. Here they feel as if they had no difficulty in confronting us"—"Now they display a great zeal for the honour of God." Upon this quotation I would make first, a few general remarks. As to meeting the unconditional decretists in the *field of reason*, I think it is a field in which *reasonable* beings delight to range, it being a rich pasture provided by the Author of our existence, to feed and strengthen our mental powers. And we would invite Mr. W. and his associates, to take a walk with us into this beautiful field. He need not fear being associated with bad company. It has been frequented, not only by philosophers, astronomers, poets and statesmen, but also by divines, and those too of the most ex-

altered character. St. Paul ‘*reasoned* with Felix on righteous, temperance, and a judgment to come,’ Acts xxiv. 25. St. Peter said, ‘And be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh a *reason* of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear,’ 1 Pet. iii. 15. And God said unto his ancient people, ‘Come now, and let *us reason* together.’ Isa. i. 18. It is true, Solomon saith, ‘A sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a *reason*,’ Prov. xxvi. 16. And to prove that he himself was not that sluggard, he observes, ‘I applied my heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the *reason* of things,’ Eccl. vii. 25. If God *work all* things, how natural for the carnal mind to indulge its native *sluggishness*, vainly *conceiting* that, inasmuch as the salvation of the elect is immutably secured, therefore there is nothing for him to do; and so persuaded is he of the truth of his decrees, that all the correct reasoning in the universe, will not drive him from his *conceited* “castle.”

However, with such sanctified examples before us, as God himself, Solomon, Isaiah, Paul and Peter, who all meet us in the “field of reason,” we need not dread the proscription of those who fear the light of reason will shine upon their opaque systems. The field of reason is ample. None are prohibited its entrance who bring their rational powers with them; who do not attempt to poison its springs with absurd dogmas, nor to open its plains with the ploughshare of irresistible decrees, nor pollute its limped waters with the foreign mixture of an unconditional-conditional election, nor mow its meadows with the resistless scythe of fatalism. Those who attempt to labour in this spacious field with such weapons, and for such ends, will soon be banished from its verdant lawns, by its original Lord and proprietor.

But is not the adorable Author of the sacred scriptures, and the Author of reason in man, the same Being? And did he not design that those precious gifts should harmonize in their testimony? Can true reason, when enlightened by the bright rays of eternal truth, contradict the infallible testimony of God in his word? Are not all the solemn declarations of God in his holy word, so many pointed appeals to the reason or understandings of men? Nay, does he not condescend to reason with them on the justice, goodness, and propriety of his ways? And what impropriety to appeal to beings who are incapable of understanding his words, or of perceiving the justice and equity, the wisdom and benevolence of his dispensations! Of what use can revelation be to irrational minds? Should man be induced to act an irrational part? Has not Mr. W. "laboured exceedingly," but in vain, to make his system harmonize with the reason and nature of things? And does he hope to impose a system of doctrines upon rational beings, which contradicts all their rational conclusions? What did the Pope more? I know the assertors of Calvinistic decrees dread to bring their doctrine to the test of rational argument; and yet, such is their inconsistency, they make sturdy efforts to reconcile their system to reason; and plead, if Mr. W. says truly, for a greater degree of human liberty than we do. Why then does he object to follow us into the pleasant field of reason? Is he afraid that the reader will discover so many exhilarating streams of truth, that he will turn with avidity and disgust, from the doleful castle of universal decrees? O no; says Mr. W. "I do not refuse to follow my antagonist into his castle," p. 19. Indeed, sir, I am not in a castle. I have not fled from the open field of reason, into a secret castle, or concealed myself behind the "secret will," for the purpose of avoiding

an open combat. If, however, the being surrounded by the rampart of scripture, and defended by the bastions of reason, will secure me from the bomb-shells of irresistible decrees, I am happy to occupy such a castle, to shelter me against the desperate onsets of so many champions, as seem to have marshalled themselves against me. Surrounded by these invulnerable walls, by the strength of the Captain of my salvation, I hope to defend myself. At any rate, I shall not resign myself a captive, until the bastions and ramparts are demolished, and the citadel is taken. However well fortified Mr. W. may think himself in his old castle of decrees, it seems the javelin of truth has roused him. He has, he tells us, ventured into the field: but I believe all who will read his book impartially, will conclude that he mistook the barren mountain of Calvinistic decrees for the prolific field of reason; or, if he ventured to look from its lofty summit sometimes, the rising odours from the precious flowers of rational arguments, which so plentifully adorn the field of reason, inflated the organs of animal life so suddenly, that gasping for breath, he shrank back with such precipitance, as prevented him from an impartial survey of this spacious field. The majestic river of universal love, issuing from the fountain of unbounded goodness, watering the plains of reason, the rivulets of rational argument, the opening flowers and ripening fruit of Christian experience, with which rational souls were loaded, all blithe and hearty, pouring out a *reasonable sacrifice*, and their *free-will offerings*; and in the mean time chanting so inelodiously in *Immanuel's land* the songs of redeeming love,—all these presented such a beautiful and variegated prospect, and echoed such a harmonious concert of sacred and rational music, that Mr. W. dare not associate himself with them, for fear of offending his old companions.

Instead of imitating the royal shepherd of Israel, by going to the flowing brook of truth, which fertilizes all the field of reason, and there filling his sling with the smooth stones of rational arguments, he puts on his old coat of mail; and mounting the rampart of his castle of decrees, bids defiance to the whole host of Arminians, Methodists, reasoners, &c. Lifting his ponderous spear, he echoes the challenge : “ Our opponents cannot but see, that we have *much scripture*, which seems naturally to support the doctrine of a *divine plan* of creation, providence and grace.” p. 19. Yes, we do see it. We never disputed but that there is much, *very much* scripture, and *reason* too, which declare that God is the Creator, provider, and gracious benefactor of the human race : but we do not concede that he creates and provides *sin* for man to feed upon. But this is not Mr. W.’s castle, it is ours. And it was erected by the divine architect, founded in the immutable fitness of things, supported by the scriptures of eternal truth, and is perfectly consistent in the eye of enlightened reason. How came then Mr. W. to imagine himself in this fortified castle ? Did he attempt to climb up some other way ? Or does he mean this only as an outward appendage, to hide the dismal appearance of his hideous castle, the walls of which are so perforated with the balls of truth, that he thinks it no longer tenable ? Before we attack him in earnest, we must dislodge him from the place we occupy. We cannot contend with him here. If he were in this sacred place we should find no difficulty in uniting in Christian harmony : for he must not suppose that we would be so imprudent as to bring scripture to prove that God is not the Creator, and the gracious Governor of the universe. We must, however, look elsewhere for our antagonist.

But where shall we find him? *Secreted* in the castle of universal decrees? Though some have affected to impress such a sacredness upon this *secret castle* as should keep us at an awful distance from an impartial examination of its origin and structure, yet we will venture to draw near with respectful steps, and take a concise view of this mighty edifice. "What! attempt an examination of the *secret will of God?*" Excuse me, my friends; since the depositaries of this *secret* have condescended to *reveal* it, we may be exempted from the charge of sacrilege, if we presume to cast a respectful look at it, in order to ascertain, if possible, its true character.

Do you wish to know, then, where this fort is which is occupied by Mr. Williston—of what materials it is made, and how defended? In respect to its *scite*, I can say no more of it, than that it appears to have been formed by the stagnant waters of error, which have been accumulating ever since the days of Augustine, who opened an inlet from the turbid waters of heathen fatalism, into the Christian pool. A mighty stream flowed, from a similar source, into it in the days of Calvin, Knox, and Zuingle; and it also received a great acquisition from the labours of Edwards, Toplady, and other champions of unconditional reprobation. Hopkins endeavoured to drain off some of the mud of reprobation, and to put in its place the sand of a *moral inability*, mixed with the clay of a *natural ability*; but they not uniting according to his expectation, an awful chasm is left, which many of his followers have been attempting to fill up. The citadel of this mighty fort, at present is situated in New-England, at a place called *Andover*; at which many a youth, panting for a morsel of bread, flee for refuge. For you must know that this fort has been so powerfully attacked at times, by some of the unpollished

tribe from the “field of reason,” who, taking some of the rifles from the mountain of divine revelation, have fired such volleys of truth against its walls, that these young builders have been thrown into great perplexity. It is even said, that, to prevent actual despair, they have instituted a “charitable society,” who, extending their benevolence to Andover, prevent these unfortunate children of decrees from falling victims to the direful effects of their own impolitic system of operations. Through these benevolent exertions of their pious friends, they are making mighty efforts to extend the dominions of their “castle;” but meeting with such almost insurmountable difficulties, that you may see despair depicted upon many of their countenances. Sometimes the beautiful plains of gospel truth, the shining mountain of Christian holiness, the majestic stream of divine benevolence, the many rivulets of Christian sympathy towards their reprobates, the high walls of God’s commandments, the refreshing showers of gospel promises, and the fertilizing field of enlightened reason—all these present such barriers in their way, that they are at their wit’s end how to proceed in accomplishing their purpose: at other times they meet such numerous bands of veteran troops, under the command of Immanuel, whose armour is divinely wrought, who have been exercised in the field of reason, and are so expert in wielding the sword of truth, the word of God, which is their principal weapon of defence, that these builders are obliged to stop their progress in building, to defend what they have already erected. And they have been so puzzled, that report saith, they have already held a consultation to determine on the expediency of altering their mode of defence, and of changing the front of their castle, that passengers may not discover the offensive parts of it. One party concluded upon this inscription, *Christ*

died for all men ; which was accordingly written over the principal gate of the castle : *The covenant of grace conditional*, was written underneath *Unconditional election and reprobation* : *Natural ability to love God without grace*, preceded *Moral inability*, in the same line : *Free moral agency* followed *Irresistible decrees*, and *Universal divine efficiency* : *Obligation and duty of all men to be perfect*, was inscribed on the same stone, but rather obscurely, with *Impossible to be perfect*. In regard to the materials with which they build, and the utensils with which they work, the reader may see a specimen of them in Mr. Williston's book ; but if he want a more ample assortment, he may find them in Calvin's Institutes, Westminster Confession of Faith, Saybrook Platform, Hopkins' Divinity, Emmons' and Williams' Sermons. If these do not satisfy his curiosity for new things, he may enter as a graduate into Andover School ; and, if possible, penetrate into the secrets of the committee who published the address of the charitable society for the education of indigent pious young men for the ministry. By this time perhaps he will have learned, that a strong and long cable is making, composed of political and religious materials so ingeniously mixed that you can hardly distinguish the one from the other :—this is to “undergird the” political “ship” in the time of a public storm :\* that is, in plain English, it is to bind all parties as much as possible together, unite their suffrage in the national elections, obtain a majority in Congress in favour of unconditional decrees, and gratuitous reprobation, establish themselves by law, and then—I am not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet, or I would venture to predict the mighty re-

\* See the address of the Charitable Society for the Education of pious young men for the ministry.

sult. But before this strong Hopkinsian castle is finished, we hope to exhibit on the delightful field of reason, such heavenly wrought materials, direct from God's sacred magazine, as shall divert the attention of the public from that gloomy castle, and fix it upon that *building which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*\*

\* The reader will, it is hoped, pardon the metaphorical garb in which the preceding observations are clothed. The ideas, and the manner of expressing them, were suggested by Mr. Williston's remarks respecting "the field of reason," and following me "into my castle." In regard to the hint respecting their making efforts to *establish themselves by law*, it is well known to have been a favourite object among the Presbyterians, especially in New-England, for some time. The efforts that were made, soon after the elevation of John Adams to the presidency of the United States, is doubtless fresh in the memory of many of our fellow-citizens, as well as the chagrin that was manifested on finding themselves disappointed. And whoever reads the address of the 'Charitable Society for the education of indigent pious young men for the ministry,' (which society is made up of some of the leading characters in the Presbyterian Church in Connecticut and Massachusetts,) signed by *Lyman Beecher*, and considers the *time* of its publication, cannot fail to perceive the same end contemplated. And although that address, on account of its being very offensive to many, was suppressed as much as possible, we still have reason to believe the *object* of it is by no means abandoned.

It seems, indeed, like a forlorn hope, for any one to promise himself an exclusive religious establishment, in this country especially, where the principles of civil and religious liberty are so perspicuously presented to the public mind, and so well, and so generally understood. But changes less likely, and fully as important have been effected by the art and ingenuity of men. It is hoped, however, that this country has not become so corrupt yet, as to demand such a scourge from God, as a religious establishment. There can be no harm, nevertheless, for the people to be on their guard, by being awake to their true interests, lest, in an evil hour, their rights and privileges be wrested from them. Such events are generally brought about by secret, slow, and insidious means. There can, indeed, be no other method used to effect this deprecated object in this country; for any who should openly avow such a design, would thereby completely prevent its accomplishment. May such a deplorable event never be witnessed in this happy land.

That I am by no means singular in supposing efforts are used to effect a religious establishment, may be seen by the fol-

Not so, says Mr. W. "His direct proof against us is very slender." It is granted that we have no text which saith in so many words, God has *not decreed* all things; or He *does not work* sin in the hearts of sinners; sinners *do not* in all their *wicked actions* fulfil the counsel of God's will. And it is equally manifest that there is no scripture which saith, God *has* decreed all things; or He *does work*

lowing energetic remarks from the pen of the Rev. Mr. Channing, of Boston, Massachusetts, which I borrow from the Rev. Martin Rutter's second letter to the Rev. Francis Brown, president of Dartmouth College, p. 25. Mr. Channing observes,

"It is, I hope, from no feeling of party, but from a sincere regard to the religion of Christ, that I would *rouse the slumbering minds* of this community to the DANGERS WHICH HANG OVER THEIR RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS. No power is so rapidly accumulated, or so dreadfully abused as ecclesiastical power. It assails men with menaces of eternal woe, unless they submit, and gradually awes the most stubborn and strongest minds into subjection. I mean not to ascribe the intention of introducing ecclesiastical tyranny to any class of Christians among us; but, I believe that many, in the fervour of their zeal, which may be essentially virtuous, are about to touch with unhallowed hands the ark of God, to support Christianity by measures which its mild and charitable spirit abhors. I believe that many, overlooking the principles of human nature, and the history of the church, are about to set in motion a spring, of which they know not the force, and cannot calculate the effects! I believe that the seed of SPIRITUAL TYRANNY is sown, and although to a careless spectator, it may seem the 'smallest of all seeds,' it has yet, within itself, a fatal principle of increase, and may yet DARKEN THIS REGION OF OUR COUNTRY WITH ITS DEADLY BRANCHES."

Those pious ministers and people of other denominations, who, with us, deprecate the coming of such a hostile foe to civil and religious liberties, will not apply these strictures to themselves, but will use their influence to prevent the growth of this "deadly" tree of "spiritual tyranny."

Mr. Brown, indeed, in his reply to Mr. Rutter, intimates, that if ever their should be an ecclesiastical establishment in this country, the Methodists will claim it. I hope he is the only one who indulges such a sentiment. If we had ever sought after it, had ever intermeddled with civil affairs, and used any measures to oppress others, there might be just grounds to apprehend such an event. But all who know any thing of our economy, know that we abhor all civil interference in prescribing in religious matters. For one, I should rather suffer with the persecuted, than triumph with the persecutors.

sin in the *hearts* of sinners to make them fulfil his will. So far then we stand upon equal ground.

As they affirm, and we deny, we are called upon to prove a negative, which is not always practicable : and, I believe every impartial man must acknowledge that on a disputed question, when no direct testimony is brought to prove the affirmative, those who deny are under no obligation to bring direct testimony to *disprove* the litigated question. If a person is accused of any crime, he stands acquitted, if he pleads not guilty, until the accusation is substantiated by competent testimony : he is under no obligation to bring testimony to prove himself innocent. Now, we think that we have invalidated, not merely by "learned criticisms," but by a fair, liberal, and just interpretation of God's word, all the testimony Mr. W. has brought in favour of his position. Of this, however, we would not be our own judges. We submit, without any anxiety, the decision of the question to those whose bigotry has not eaten up their candour. Under this conviction, we do not think ourselves under any obligation to bring direct testimony to vindicate ourselves, until their direct proof is brought to condemn us ; and then, indeed, our vindication will be unnecessary.

Perhaps a very good reason may be offered why the sacred scriptures have not, in so many words, contradicted the assertion, that God is the *efficient cause* of sin, or that he *worketh* it in the hearts of sinners. This horrid sentiment, so dishonourable to God, probably was not advanced by the enemies of revelation in the days of the inspired writers ; and therefore, it was needless to contradict it. That they inculcated sentiments very near akin to it, is presumable from the spirited manner in which some of the inspired penmen have refuted such calumnies. The preceding observations are

not made to excuse ourselves from the labour of disproving the position of Mr. W. that God *worketh wickedness*!\* For although from the customary rules of argumentation we might be excused, yet for the sake of exhibiting the whole truth as it is in Jesus, we will lay before the reader, a few out of the many texts which might be adduced, accompanied with such remarks as are thought expedient, leaving it to him to determine whether they can be reconciled with the doctrine of a universal divine efficiency.

'And the LORD said unto Cain—And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; when thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.' Gen. iv. 9, 10, 11. Can any one seriously believe that God wrought efficiently upon Cain's heart, and caused him to will the death of his brother Abel? that God irresistibly compelled Cain to this horrid murder, by laying him under the invincible constraint of a *moral inability* to do good? by giving him an *inclination* which, on account of his *moral inability* he could not counteract, led him to premeditate, and finally to execute the murder of his brother? Is such a sentiment compatible with either justice or goodness? Hear the awful thunder of God's inflexible justice! *The voice of thy brother's blood, crieth*

\* Perhaps some may think this expression is too strong. But if God *work all things*, and if wickedness is worked at all, then he must work it. If an action, which is apparently wicked, loose its character of wickedness, on account of the agent who produces it, and if God work all things, then there is no such thing as wickedness in the universe. But wickedness confessedly exists; and Hopkinsianism declares in categorical terms, that God works all things; therefore that doctrine, by inevitable consequence, declares that God works wickedness. And this single consideration stamps the doctrine with the indelible impression of the most horrid blasphemy.

unto me from the ground. And now art thou cursed, &c. Cursed! For what? Why, according to Mr. W. for having been the passive instrument of fulfilling the unalterable counsel of God. For having answered the end of his existence. If Cain had been initiated into the modern doctrine of decrees, how forcibly might he have pleaded an arrest of the judgment pronounced upon him. ‘Why, O my God! must I be doomed to wander a fugitive upon the earth, and be denied its fruits? Must all this come upon me, because I did not rise up against omnipotence, and frustrate with my puny arm, the counsels of eternal wisdom? My mind was entirely under the irresistible control of thy secret power and will. Thou didst excite the desire of revenge in my heart, and directed that desire to the object of my envy—my *brother's blood*. And I could no more have resisted the secret impulse of thy Almighty power, than I can raise my dead brother to life—And must I, O my merciful judge—must I suffer thy vengeance for having fulfilled the purposes of thy mind? May not this consideration of having contributed by that murderous act to the “perfection of the universe,” mitigate my punishment a little?’ But if Cain had been tempted to any such plea, a recollection of what God had before said, would have closed his lips. ‘Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?’ ver. 6, 7. If any who believe in universal decrees, can, consistently with his principle, reconcile such tender expostulations with the *sincerity* of Jehovah; and such singular punishments as were inflicted upon Cain, with his untarnished *justice*, he will have rendered an essential service to his cause.

‘And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt: for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The

end of all flesh is come before me ; for the earth is filled with violence through them : and behold I will destroy them with the earth.' Gen. vi. 12, 13. Were these devoted antediluvians destined to utter destruction for not preventing the Almighty from fulfilling the good pleasure of his will in them ? for not preventing Him from working efficiently in their hearts, all that *corruption* and *violence* of which they had been the mere passive instruments ? Suppose they had made an effort to obey the warning voice of Noah ; could they have resisted omnipotence ? who passed a decree before they were born, that they should be wicked. Nay, more, according to Mr. W. their wicked characters were formed as they were by the efficient hand of God ; and then, because they were so formed, and so compelled to do, they were washed from the earth by an overwhelming flood ! Do such glaring inconsistencies need direct testimony to prove that they belong not to the economy of God ?

'Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.' ch. ix. 25. Will the LORD curse the work of his own hands ? "He worketh all things" says Mr. W. Consequently he worked in the heart of Ham the father of Canaan, moved the volition of his mind, and produced the indiscreet desire in his heart to expose the nakedness of his father ; and all this was in perfect conformity to the primary intention, and unalterable determination of God ; and yet his unfortunate descendants must be cursed for it. O how this dreadful doctrine dishonours the God of universal benevolence. 'Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah fire and brimstone from the LORD out of heaven.' ch. xix. 24. For what ? Poor unhappy men ! Doomed to utter destruction for being, and for passively doing what they could no more have avoided, than they could have arrested the

movement of the planetary system and have stopt 'its rapid wheels' in their progress. 'Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did unto his Father, in slaying his seventy brethren: And all the evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their heads.' Judges ix. 56, 57. That is, according to our opponent, God rewarded them in vengeance for having fulfilled his decree, and for having performed his secret will. Let those who can swallow such crude indigestible contrarieties, gormadize their mental appetites to the full. They may find a plentiful feast, which has been, some of it at least, served up, long since the days of the reformation, in Mr. W.'s vindication of Hopkinsian decrees. 'The **LORD** trieth the righteous; but the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul *hateth*.' Ps. xi. 5. Mr. W. asserts that God formeth *wicked*, yea *all wicked* characters. And the royal Psalmist saith, that the Lord *hateth the wicked*. Does He hate the work of his own hands? What an adept, is this vindicator of reformed doctrines, at contradicting the Almighty. However, "His heart meaneth not so:" he only means to establish his system. If one half of the Bible is sacrificed, it must fall a victim to this all-devouring Lion of irresistible decrees. 'These six things doth the **LORD** hate; yea, seven are an *abomination* unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and him that soweth discord among brethren.' Prov. vi. 16—20. All these seven sins, the Lord not only *hateth*, but they are an *abomination* to him. Contrast Solomon and Mr. W. - Mr. W. "God worketh *all things*"—"all things are according to his pleasure:" Solomon. There are seven abominations which the wicked work: and all these seven abomina-

tions the Lord hateth. It might, perhaps, be deemed impertinent to ask the reader in which of these testimonies he will confide. But I would ask him, as a reasonable man, to tell us how far the above words of Solomon are removed from a *direct* and *positive* proof against Mr. Williston's doctrine: Is it "very slender?"

But more of a similar character, furnished by the same infinitely wise Spirit, is at hand. 'I hate the work of them that turn aside'—from another's arguments think ye? Ps. ci. 3. 'I hate robbery for burnt offerings,' Isa. lxi. 8. 'I hate, I despise your feast days,' Amos v. 21. 'Thou hatest all workers of iniquity,' Ps. v. 5. 'But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate,' Rev. ii. 6. All these texts prove, as pointedly as any thing can be proved, that the LORD God *hateth* sin of every kind. But Mr. W. to avoid their force, makes a distinction, not known in the word of God, that although he does not delight in sin on its own account, yet he takes pleasure in it on account of its being productive of good. If he will bring one text to prove that sin ever did any good, or that God takes pleasure in unrighteousness on any account, we will then, and not till then admit his distinction, and believe in his doctrine. 'As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked.' 1 Sam. xxiv. 13. Let us ask Mr. W. where wickedness proceeds from? Ans. God's agency is employed, "In bringing all this wrath of man into existence," p. 256. I suppose it will not be disputed that the wrath of man is wickedness, or that he who forms a wicked character is the author of that character; but, according to the scheme now opposed, God forms wicked characters, and is the "effectuating cause" of the *wrath of man*. Apply the proverb, *wickedness proceedeth from the wicked*, to this doctrine; and, if

the proverb is true, he who forms wicked characters, and effectuates wrath in the hearts of men, is a wicked being. On a former occasion, we saw how Mr. W.'s doctrine swept all unholiness from the universe. Now, a more melancholy devastation is beheld, namely, all *holiness* is taken from the Deity. ‘Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.’ Rom. ix. 14. This is, not only ‘*changing the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man*; but it is changing him into the image of the *God of this world*, who is emphatically styled the *roaring lion, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour*. ‘Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.’ Isai. v. 20. I know not how *good* and *evil*, *light* and *darkness*, *bitter* and *sweet*, can be more completely *compounded*, and more perfectly referred to the same source, than is done by Mr. Williston. That it is not his *intention* to represent the infinitely wise and holy God, as foolish and unholy, we readily admit; but that his inconsistent *doctrine* does this in the most conclusive manner, must, I think, be admitted by all impartial men. It is hoped, however, that he will not continue to close his eyes upon the light of truth, after being convinced of his error. If he should be so unwise, I will venture to remind him of one more caution—‘Wo to him’—that ‘take away the righteousness of the righteous from him.’ Isa. v. 23. If our antagonist is determined to deprive the sinner of all his accountable sinfulness, we beseech him to spare the adorable Author of our existence, and not strip him of his essential holiness.

‘Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man

is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.' James i. 13, 14. That the Apostle in these words, designed to refute the idea, that God excited men to moral evil, is manifest from the context: for, that very evil to which he had asserted God could not be tempted, in the next verse he declares originates from men's desire, which *brings forth sin*. And, in opposition to those who would insinuate that this evil originates from God, the Apostle, in verse 17, affirms, that 'Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.' And lest some might say that he was mutable, sometimes forming righteous, and sometimes unrighteous characters, the holy apostle adds, 'With whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.'— 'The righteous Lord' invariably 'loveth righteousness, and hateth iniquity.' The same immutable property of the divine Being is exhibited by the apostle John; 'God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.' 1 John i. 5.

Now, I think that these testimonies of St. James and St. John, are direct and positive evidence against the doctrine of Mr. W. A man, indeed, must rack his ingenuity to reconcile them with that doctrine which makes God the efficient author of sin; and which represents him, as foreordaining, secretly influencing, and directly forming wicked characters: and also declares that all things, all these wicked characters, with all their motives, designs, and wicked works, are according to his counsel, perfectly pleasing to his mind and will.

'Out of the mouth of the Most High proceedeth NOT EVIL and good.' Lam. iii. 38. How then can God be the efficient cause, or the figurative fountain of moral evil? Is not this text a direct and explicit proof against the doctrine we are opposing? 'Doth a fountain send forth at the *same place*, sweet

water and bitter?—So can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.' James iii. 11, 12. Here it is expressly affirmed that no fountain, either natural or moral, human or divine, can send forth at the same time both pure and impure streams; that is, God cannot, consistently with his attributes, be the *fontal* or efficient cause of moral evil. And to put the question beyond all dispute respecting God being the cause, or figurative fountain of moral evil, our apostle, after having warned his brethren, in verse 14, against '*bitter envying and strife in their hearts,*' says, 'This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is *earthly, sensual* and *devilish.*' ver. 25. And in verse 17 he contradistinguishes this *earthly, sensual*, and *devilish envying* and *strife*, from the 'wisdom coming from above, which is first *pure*, then *peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated*, full of *mercy and good fruits.*' In these words, St. James affirms flatly, and in the most unequivocal manner, that God is not, in any sense, the cause, source, or fountain of moral evil, such as *envying* and *strife*: on the contrary, this cometh from *beneath*, from the *earth*, from the *sensual* hearts of sinners, from the *Devil*. And that no one might misunderstand him, he proceeds to show what does come from God, namely, that which is *pure*, in opposition to *impure* desires; that which is *gentle*, &c. in opposition to *strife*, &c. I do not see how we could desire more direct and positive testimony against Mr. W. than this of St. James. And therefore we will now leave it to the reader to determine, whether our direct proof against his doctrine, "is very slender." If the bible does not contradict itself, and if there is but one solitary text, which, upon a fair construction, contradicts his doctrine, then the whole tenor of God's word is against that doctrine: and, of course, there can be none in favour of it.—This, indeed, is really the case. From an im-

partial survey of the sacred scriptures, it will appear manifest to every attentive observer, that the grand design of revelation is, to vindicate the character of its sacred Author from the false imputations of his enemies who might charge him with injustice, unmercifulness, and unholiness. And that the scheme of doctrine which we are now opposing, by necessary inference, tarnishes His adorable character, with those capital defects, has, I believe, been abundantly proved in the preceding pages : Therefore that doctrine is contrary to the general tenor of God's word. This shews the perfect harmony of sacred scripture with enlightened reason. Yes, it is the flowing stream of revelation, which waters, and fertilizes all the "field of reason." Those therefore who walk circumspectly in this spacious field, under the enlightening beams of the Sun of righteousness, will be directed to this flowing fountain of eternal truth ; where they will refresh their weary spirits with its exhilarating streams ; and, feeling their mental powers invigorated, they will delightfully behold that the same God who gave the revelation of his will in the holy scriptures, gave to man reason to perceive its consistency with itself, and its sacred harmony with the nature and fitness of things. Guided, as I humbly trust, by the influence of this truth, I will now lay before the reader some more of the unhappy consequences of Mr. Williston's system. And, in doing this, I hope also to shew how scripture and reason harmonize.

1. One weighty objection against Mr. Williston's scheme, and which was mentioned in my letters to him, is, That it sets the decrees and commands in battle array against each other. This objection he not only admits, but endeavours to shew that such contrariety is perfectly consistent. See his book, p. 42—45. And to make its consistency

apparent, it is said that the decrees are the rule of God's conduct, and the commands the rule of our duty. Indeed, this distinction might be admitted, were the decrees confined within scriptural bounds : but being let loose by the Hopkinsian theology, they overflow the banks of gospel truth, taking in their rapid course such a universal sweep, that every thing, commands, promises, and threatenings, are washed from the world. God has decreed the decrees, his own purposes, commands, and promises ; and likewise decreed that the reprobates should neither obey the commands, avoid the threatenings, nor believe in the promises. In fact, whether the commands are obeyed or disobeyed, the object of the decree is equally effected : for, nothing great or small either in the physical or moral world, can elude the all-comprehensive grasp of Hopkinsian decrees. Now, what becomes of the above distinction ? Is it not perfectly nominal ? If God's conduct is regulated by the decrees, and if the decrees are universal in their operation, then every thing good and bad is effected by the decree : of consequence, God, by the operation of his own decree, breaks his own commandments. He, by force of his decree, or by his own efficiency, opposes, and influences sinners to oppose, and violate the precepts of his own law. If this inference be denied, then the doctrine of a universal divine efficiency is given up ; but if it be admitted, then the above distinction is declared nugatory.

Let us now look at the fatal effects of that doctrine. God *commands all men every where to repent.* There stands an impenitent sinner. The minister of the Lord Jesus enforces the above command upon him. If a believer in this doctrine of decrees, he may justly reply, 'God, who decreed and brings to pass all things, has decreed and effected my impenitence.' Nay, but he has com-

manded you to repent. ‘ Truly ; but his decrees and commands are opposed to each other ; and his decrees being immutable, and the invariable rule by which he regulates his own conduct, and perfectly pleasing to him, he has determined I shall not obey the command. And even if I would, I cannot, unless he has decreed I shall ; but that he has not so decreed, is evident from my present *in-disposition* to repent : this is a certain indication to me, that I am under the influence of the decree, which is in opposition to the command.’ But the command is the rule of *your* duty ; therefore you ought to obey it. ‘ Nay, but the decree is the rule of *God’s* duty ; and therefore he ought and will, and *does* enforce it, for I now feel its effects in my present *inability* to comply with the command.’ How can such objections be obviated by the asserters of this strange doctrine ? They cannot say in truth, that they originate from an abuse of their scheme : for, this is not *abusing* it, but *using* it according to the license it gives ; all such objections flow as naturally from it, as the rays of light do from the sun.

Make an experiment of the opposite doctrine, which makes the decrees and commands of God harmonize. God has commanded all men every where to repent ; and he has decreed to afford all men every where all proper assistance to enable them to comply with the command. Let the minister of God enforce this doctrine upon an impenitent sinner ; what can he say ? He has no excuse unless he abuse the doctrine. He cannot say truly, that he has not *power* to repent ; for the decree of God by which he regulates his own conduct, has furnished the sinner with power. Neither can he say in truth, that God did not design he should repent ; because his design is fully manifested by the command : there is no secret will, no private de-

cree of God behind the curtain, which prevents the sinner from obeying the command. He cannot say, there has been no provision made for him ; because Jesus Christ tasted death for every man : Nor yet, that God is not willing he should be saved ; because the willingness of God to save sinners, has been demonstrated by the gift of Christ, and by the solemn declaration of God himself, that he is *not willing any should perish*. Neither can the impenitent sinner excuse himself by saying, there is no necessity of repentance ; for God hath said, ‘ Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.’ Nor can the sinner justly presume upon to-morrow ; because God has said, ‘ My Spirit shall not always strive with man’—‘ To-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.’ Now what just excuse can the sinner find in this doctrine ? Does not the cord of truth bind him hand and foot, not leaving him even the limb of an excuse by which he can cling to the pillars of carnal security ? And does he, after being stript of all his unscriptural excuses, throw himself as a condemned sinner, at the foot of the cross, crying, help me, O my God ! For Christ’s sake, have mercy upon me, O my Father—save me from this mighty load of condemnation under which I groan ! While this penitent sinner thus pleads the merits of Christ, looking to him by faith, God the Father shines upon him in the face of Jesus Christ, sheds abroad his love in his heart, saying unto him, *Live*. Thus has the doctrine of truth surrounded the sinner, disarmed him of all his defensive weapons, brought him a willing captive to the Lord Jesus, persuaded him to beg for mercy as a condemned criminal ; and finally ravished him with a believing view, and with a reviving taste of redeeming love.—While the opposite doctrine leaves the impenitent sinner as it found him, (unless he be irresistibly conquer-

ed by Almighty power) furnishes him with weapons of defence, arms him with arguments against the design and willingness of God to save him, gives him no certain evidence that Christ ever loved him, though he died for him ; thus confirming him in his infidelity, and giving him just cause to conclude that God is an *hard Master*, who requires impossibilities of his creatures, and who punishes them with everlasting destruction, for not altering the unalterable determinations of God.

Again : God has prohibited by his commands, idolatry, Sabbath-breaking, profane swearing, lying, stealing, adultery, &c. &c. But, according to the scheme now opposed, He has decreed, and by an efficient operation brings all these things to pass ; and they are therefore in perfect conformity to his own good pleasure. Look around—see perhaps three fifths of mankind sunk in the grossest idolatry, and degraded by the most obscene rites, and sensual gratifications ; while, in the christian world, perhaps, three fourths, are not only destitute of the experience and practice of Christianity, but are at open war with its self-denying doctrines : all this idolatry, and all this inexcusable defection from the precepts of the gospel, according to our opponents, are brought into existence by the divine efficiency, in direct opposition to God's most holy commandments. Now I ask, and I appeal to every man of common understanding for the correctness of the sentiment, does not God, according to this doctrine, oppose, and by his own efficient operation, violate his own commands ! All idolatry, and every other abomination, though expressly prohibited by God himself, is, nevertheless, not only decreed, but also, in conformity to the purpose of God, brought to pass, and effected by the efficient working of God on the human heart. So says Hopkinsianism—and by so saying, it stamps

itself with the most glaring, and palpable absurdity. How would the heathen world be astonished, were they informed that all the past abominations of their ancestors, and all their present systems of idolatry, were the effect of God's eternal decree, and, on the whole, for the best, and therefore well-pleasing to God! Would such arguments recommend Christianity to them? Induce them to renounce their idolatry and embrace another system? Should not every friend to Christianity, who sighs for the conversion of the heathen, use his influence to prevent such sentiments from being propagated among them? Were they admitted, would they not totally eclipse the peculiar glories of Christianity, and furnish the benighted heathens with an excuse for all their abominations? May the penetrating beams from the Sun of Righteousness be so widely diffused, that the darkening mists of error may every where be dissipated, and the sacred harmony of truth every where be seen.

2. Another most fatal consequence of this doctrine is, that it disarms the minister of the Lord Jesus, of all his arguments to convict the sinner of his guilt. One grand design of the gospel is, to vindicate the claims of God's righteous law against the sinner; to exhibit its just requirements; and to fix the criminality of sin exclusively upon the sinner himself. But the doctrine now opposed, prevents the accomplishment of this design, by transferring the whole responsibility of the sinner's conduct, to the Author of his existence. For, how can a man be guilty for having submitted to the effect of determinations which were made before he was born, and which were effected independent of his choice? That man's responsible agency is totally annihilated by this scheme, is manifest even from Mr. W.'s ineffectual attempt to reconcile them together.—Here stands a man accused with a breach of the

moral law : supposing him a consistent believer in universal divine efficiency, how will you convict him of guilt ? He may say, ‘the decree which had for its object, the greatest sum of good to the universe, has had its accomplishment in all my actions : why then should I be condemned ?’ But the *law* condemns you. ‘Truly ; but the decree is opposed to that law ; and are they not both right ? And if both right, how could my actions have been wrong ? Besides, must I be *accountable* for actions, which were brought into existence by a present exciting agency, and an efficient operation of the Almighty ?’ All such objections are licensed by the doctrine we oppose. It furnishes every transgressor with all such excuses for his wicked conduct. And here we may remark, that, inasmuch as all guilt is destroyed, so the necessity of pardon is superceded. Redemption, and all its benefits are devoured by this rapacious foreigner, universal decree. To quote scripture or to use arguments to prove that mankind are guilty, is entirely needless ; because no one will dispute its truth ; and, it is equally manifest that the system, which, by necessary inference exculpates man from blame, is unscriptural and irrational ; therefore unworthy of belief.

3. A third insuperable objection against the Hopkinsian scheme is, that it has impelled them to set aside one of the most evident axioms in moral science, namely, *That the character of a cause is to be ascertained from the effects which are produced.* Every one who has attended to this subject knows, that this is one of the most popular arguments to prove the existence and perfections of Deity. And it is sanctioned by the highest authority : the inspired penmen have sanctified its use. ‘The heavens declare the glory of God : and the firmament sheweth his handy work.’ Day unto day ut-

tereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.' Psalm xix. 1, 2. Here the royal Psalmist declares, that the *glory of God* is exhibited by the beauty, order, and magnitude of the luminaries of heaven: and that his infinite *knowledge* is demonstrated in the continual succession of day and night.

From the original perfection of the world, the manifest adaption of all its parts to answer their end, the order, harmony, and admirable symmetry so visible throughout the whole, we infer the Almighty power, infinite wisdom, and unbounded goodness of the adorable Creator. So also, from the exact conformity of the divine law to the relation of moral beings to each other, the precision with which the nature and extent of moral duties is discriminated, the perspicuous account of the creation in its original perfection, the manner in which moral evil was introduced, thereby carrying the mind to the fountain of human misery, are all so accurately traced in the sacred scriptures,—from these data we justly infer that these scriptures were given by inspiration of God. The infinite exactitude with which the scheme of redemption is suited to the moral condition of man in his present state of degradation, its aptitude to restore him to the lost image of God, its admirable conformity to the guilty state of man as a fallen being, the purity and excellence of its doctrines and precepts; all these indicate the characters of wisdom and benevolence in the Author of this glorious plan of Redemption. And indeed this argument may be considered one of the strongest internal evidences of the divine authority of the law and the gospel. Predictions verified by events, miracles well attested, the records of which are found in the holy scriptures, also indicate the presence and operation of a divine hand. In all these instances, and many more,

which might be mentioned, the character of the cause is ascertained from the effects produced, according to the above axiom. But Mr. W. by denying the truth of the axiom, destroys one of the most correct and infallible data, from which we may infer the existence and perfection of God, and the truth and divine authority of the sacred scriptures.

St. Paul, also, used the same argument in his epistle to the Romans, to prove that the heathen philosophers were without excuse for *unrighteously hiding the truth*, respecting the being and attributes of God, from the common people: for changing, by their systems of philosophy and schemes of theology, ‘the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.’ This human policy, the apostle declares to have been foolishness. That they had sufficient means, to have led them to a different conclusion, respecting the character of God, the apostle affirms in these words; ‘For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because when they knew God, they glorified him not as God; neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened.’ Rom. i. 18—23. Denying, it is probable, the truth of the axiom, that the character of a cause is inferable from its effects, and adopting as the basis of their philosophy the doctrine of *fate*, their *foolish hearts were so darkened* that they *vainly imagined* that the infinitely glorious Creator was *like to corruptible man*, possessing passions and propensities like him in his present state of moral degradation; and hence they concluded the gods were the fountain, *fontal*, or efficient cause of all evil, as well as good. Thus

does the doctrine of the Hopkinsians, and the doctrine of these heathen philosophers amalgamate.—See the reasoning of Mr. W. on this subject exposed, p. 66—75 of this work.

But, as the truth of this maxim has been denied, by other Hopkinsian writers besides Mr. W. it may not be amiss to exhibit its truth by other illustrations. Examine then that book. Do you discover signs of genius, strength of intellect, correct taste, and an improved mind? Do you not hence conclude the author was a man of genius, and of improved intellectual powers? But why? Because an effect partakes of the likeness of its cause. Study that constitution by whose principles the people are governed. Are they just? Are the persons, property, characters and privileges of the subjects secured? Are the natural, civil, and religious rights of the citizens guarded? Are the various relative duties of ruler and ruled, master and servant, &c. &c. discriminated? and the several departments of government duly balanced, guarded, and directed in their operation to the ultimate good of the whole, and of every individual? And do you not from hence conclude that this constitution was designed, framed, and adopted by wise and good men? But why draw this inference? Because an effect partakes of the likeness of its cause. Examine that piece of mechanism. Is it imperfect, not answering its end? unfit for use? What then is your conclusion? Why, that a novice has been at work. And this just inference is founded on the truth of the axiom, that an effect partakes of the likeness of its cause. Do you discover manifest imperfections in the present disordered state of the world? What is the conclusion? ‘An enemy hath done this.’ It is not now as it was once. These characteristics of imperfection, sin, ignorance, error, woe and death, manifestly indicate, that some

wicked agent hath been at work. So the maxim saith—and so also saith the sacred scriptures—‘God made man upright, but he hath sought out many inventions.’ But the Hopkinsians, by denying the truth of the maxim, have refered all these evils to God, as their efficient cause! And how pointedly do they thereby contradict the scriptural account of the agency of wicked men and devils. What monster has slaughtered thousands of innocent children, overturned and desolated provinces and kingdoms, and carried devastation and death with him? Why, according to Mr. W. who denies the truth of our maxim, all this may have been done by some kind, generous, and humane agent. If an effect do not partake of the likeness of its cause, it is no proof that *Herod* was wicked because he murdered the innocent babes of Bethlehem; no, nor that Pharaoh was a tyrant, because he oppressed the Israelites. They might have meant it for the “good of the great whole” of their subjects!

It is presumed that the reader by this time wonders that any man should have deliberately denied the truth of an axiom, so essential to form a correct decision respecting the character of any cause, author, or agent: But he will be more surprised to hear that it has been denied for the purpose of vindicating the doctrines of the reformation! How came these bold champions to enter their solemn protest against the Pope and his adherents? Did not these men of God, infer the wickedness of the men, and of their systems of operation, by the pernicious effects which were produced in the Romish church? While they beheld almost every species of wickedness sanctioned by public example, and licensed for a stipulated price, by which indulgencies to commit sin were purchased, and crimes of the darkest hue sanctified by clerical authority, the

people oppressed and robbed by ecclesiastical tyranny and civil despotism ;—I say, while the immortalized LUTHER and others beheld these abominations, pouring forth like a mighty torrent, did they not justly infer that the fountain whence these impure streams issued, was dreadfully corrupted ? Had they, like some of their pretended followers, denied the truth of our axiom, they never would have presumed on the impurity and wickedness of the hierarchy of Rome, because they saw so much ungodliness effected by it. Men of renown ! How unlike some of their disciples. Acting upon the principle for which we now contend, they concluded that the assumed head of the church, was criminally corrupt ; and hence with a bold, but Christian intrepidity, they disclaimed his authority, abjured his jurisdiction, and renounced his pretended infallibility ; justly concluding that he who was the author of so many errors, could not himself be infallibly right. And did they not reason correctly ? No, if the truth of our maxim be denied : but if admitted, they reasoned conclusively, and acted consistently. Protesting against both the fountain and streams of impurity, which they saw overflowing the moral world, and opening a way to the pure fountain of eternal truth and righteousness, they directed their followers to its refreshing waters, that they might drink of its exhilarating streams and live forever. So far as they followed Christ, may we be stimulated to emulate their example, and enter our protest against every principle which has an unrighteous tendency, as well as every practice inconsistent with the precepts of the gospel.

One of the strongest objections that I know to the present doctrine, is, If an effect must partake of the likeness of its cause, and if all things were created good, how came moral evil in existence ? If

man were holy, how could he have committed sin ? I have placed this objection in the strongest point of light ; and yet, I do not apprehend it is insuperable. When it is said, a good cause *cannot* produce a bad effect, the proposition is predicated of the *immutable* nature of the cause. And, as God is *immutable* wise, just, good and holy, and therefore cannot, without becoming imperfect, divest himself of any of these essential properties of his nature, *He cannot* be the Author, or effectuating cause of any foolish, unjust, bad or unholy effect. But when this maxim is applied to *mutable* beings, such as angels or men, it must be limited to the time that such beings *remain* wise and good, and while they continue to use their active powers in obedience to the divine will : *while* they thus remain, all their actions must be wise and good. However difficult it may be to *explain how* such beings changed in the object of their choice ; or, in other words, whatever mysteries there may be on the subject of the origin of evil, it is manifest that a *fallible* being is liable to make an unwise choice, because of the imperfection of his judgment ; and a *mutable* being is liable to change from good to bad because of the *mutability* of his nature : and, as to the origin of evil, so far as man is accountable, it seems most proper to refer it to the volition of his mind, in listening to the voice of the deceitful serpent.

Both scripture and reason declare, that man was created holy and good ; but both of these witnesses testify that he is now unholy and bad. Here then are two facts supported by the most ample testimony. Man then has suffered a change by some means. *How* that change was effected, *reason* alone cannot give us satisfactory information. *Revelation*, however, solves the difficulty, by conducting our minds to the cause of this mighty change. *That* declares, that man, yielding to the subtle insinua-

tions of the tempter, transgressed the law of his Maker, thereby excluding himself from the paradise of God, and effacing the *image of righteousness and true holiness* in which he was created, and entailed a moral disease upon himself and his unfortunate posterity. But there was an extraneous cause accompanying this act. There was a subtle serpent, whose beguiling speech operated as an external motive upon the woman; and her solicitation to her husband to participate with her in eating the fruit *which was pleasant to the eyes, and greatly to be desired to make one wise*, operated as a double incentive upon Adam's mind; and he, in an evil hour, willed a compliance with the temptations.—Here we have a proof of his *fallible* and *mutable* nature. And so also now the wisest and best of men, although while they continue wise and good, and while they use their active powers as they ought, the effects which they produce must bear distinctive marks of wisdom and goodness, yet, being *fallible* they may err, and being *mutable* they may, by a wrong use of their active powers, change from good to bad. The most rational account that can be given of this matter, I believe is, that man in the beginning possessed, and still possesses, an inherent power, under the persuasive influence of motives, and the resistible control of God's moral government, of beginning motion, and of selecting at pleasure, among a variety of objects, which he will. However difficult it may be to ascertain or discriminate the properties of the human soul, nothing can be more certain, I think, than that it is something which *thinks, wills, and acts freely*; and that this thinking, acting, and voluntary something, is a proper subject of moral government, free and responsible for its operations: and though made upright at first, was capable, under those restraints and incentives with which the Creator surrounded

it, by its own energies, of either continuing upright, or of prostrating itself by making a wrong choice. The latter, it seems, was preferred. And in this instance both its fallible and changeable nature were evinced.

Whether these observations will satisfy the inquisitive or not, the axiom for which we contend is amply supported, not only by rational argument, but also by the testimony of sacred Scripture ; and this is another proof of the delightful harmony of divine testimony with the deductions of enlightened reason. ‘*A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit.*’ Mat. vii. 18. ‘*Doth a fountain send forth at the same place, sweet water and bitter?*’ No ; ‘*for no fountain can both yield salt water and fresh.*’ James iii. 11, 12. The obvious conclusion is, that a system which induces its supporters to annihilate for its defence, an axiom of such evident utility, so strongly supported by scripture and reason, must be founded in error. Renounce the system, and you may safely follow the current of truth, and say, That God, who is immutably good, wise and holy, cannot be the “*effectuating cause of moral evil.*”

## CHAPTER II.

*On Human Depravity.*

**O**N entering upon this subject, circumstances have rendered it necessary to rectify some mistakes.

When I published my letters to Mr. Williston, I observed in the second letter, which treated the subject now under consideration, that I thought he had misstated the question on that subject, in his sermon; and I am under the same conviction still. That he did, I think I shall be able to prove to the satisfaction of all impartial readers.

In his sermon, he said, p. 29. "It was the second question in the debate, Whether men, in their natural state, previous to regeneration, are totally sinful or depraved." "This," said I in reply, p. 67, "I believe is erroneous. If I am not greatly mistaken, the question stood thus—*Is man totally depraved until he is justified?*" Mr. W. in his vindication, avers in positive terms, that I was under a mistake, and that he was right: and to prove his assertion, he tells us, p. 55. that he has the manuscript minutes of the public debate before him; and from them he says it appears, that the question was, Are all men "totally depraved"—"until they were regenerated?" Now, whether I was mistaken or not, it is manifest that *he was*, either in his sermon, or his vindication; for, the two statements are more at variance, than are my question and his last statement. The reader is requested to pay particular attention to the wording of the question in the sermon, and to compare it with the one in the vindication.

*In the sermon it stands thus :*

“Whether men, in their natural state, previous to regeneration, are totally depraved, or sinful.”

*In the vindication it stands thus :*

“Whether men “are totally depraved”—until they were regenerated.”

When I objected to his statement of the question, it was not to the word *regenerated*; for I thought that this term was used in the same sense as *justified*; and, that my readers might not misapprehend me, I apprized them, p. 71, that I used those terms synonymously: but the objection I had, and still have, to Mr. W’s statement is, because he inserted the word *previous* in his sermon, instead of *until*, which he has used in his vindication; and also, because in his sermon he inserted the words, *natural state*, which were not in the question, according to his own acknowledgment in his vindication. It will now be perceived, I apprehend, by every attentive reader, that if the *vindicator* be right, then the *sermonizer* was wrong; for they are totally at variance.

That all our readers may be fully apprized of the importance of the above distinction in this part of our controversy, it is necessary to remark, that the reason why I objected to the words, *natural state*, and *previous*, is, because we do hold that mankind in a *totally natural state*, are totally depraved; and that *previous* to regeneration they are totally sinful; but we deny that they *remain* so, *until* regenerated or justified. The only difference between us therefore, as I then conceived was, Do sinners *remain* totally depraved *until* regenerated or justified; for I understood and used these terms as synonymous; and, to prevent mistake, I informed Mr. W. that I confounded them. Not that I considered the words *regeneration* and *justification* as having, according to their *radical import*, the same signification: but I concluded he used them in the same sense, for the

following reasons. 1. In his sermon on regeneration, he contended that a regenerated man was in the favour of God, possessing disinterested benevolence, being born of God, and having holiness stamped on his heart. 2. He argued that all regenerated men had passed the “dividing line” between life and death—all regenerated sinners were, according to him, on “the side of life;” and, according to his doctrine of infallible perseverance, they were sure of heaven. 3. Now I could not perceive how a *saint*, that is, a *holy one*, one born of God, and in the way of infallible perseverance, could be, at the same time, in a state of condemnation, or not in a state of justification. 4. Although, therefore, there may be a perceivable distinction between regeneration and justification, I considered them so intimately connected, that a truly regenerated man, must be in a state of justification, for the reasons above mentioned. These considerations led me to conclude that Mr. W. believed all regenerated men were justified; and therefore of set purpose, I used those terms synonymously to prevent confusion.

If Mr. W. had attended to these things, he might have saved himself all that labour in p. 56, to prove that I confounded these terms; and likewise it would have superseded the necessity of his insinuation in p. 58, that I laboured to shift the terms for the purpose of avoiding the contested question. For my candour on this subject, I shall submit to the decision of my readers who impartially weigh what is said. My simple avowal of it, would be, perhaps, insufficient to produce conviction, unless it were attended with extraneous testimony. And, that the reader may have the whole subject before him, it is expedient to remark, that, when I had read Mr. W’s vindication on this point, I addressed a letter to him, pledging myself, that, if I had

misstated the question, my acknowledgment, when convicted, should be as public as my error had been: I therefore requested him to send me an attested copy of the question, from the manuscript minutes of the debate, informing him that I wanted the *question*, and not the *arguments*. He had the politeness to answer my letter; but informed me that the *question* was not in the minutes; and therefore he sent me some of the *arguments*, and from these it does appear, that in the dispute between Mr. Benedict and myself, that the word *regeneration* was principally used; and therefore, either the terms were confounded in the debate, or I was under a mistake in inserting the word *justified*. I have only further to say, that I also had a copy of the minutes of the debate, (but which is now lost) which was attested by the same persons; and I distinctly remember of examining them some time after the debate; and it amounts to a satisfactory certainty to my own mind, that the word *justified*, and not *regenerated* was in the *question*. It is possible, however, that I am under a mistake; on which account I said in my letter to Mr. W. ‘If I am not greatly mistaken,’ &c. Now he acknowledges in his vindication, that the question was, is man “totally depraved”—“until regenerated?” and therefore it was not as he had stated in his sermon, “in a *natural* state, *previous* to regeneration.” All the mistake then that I made, if I made any, was, in substituting the word *justified* for *regenerated*; and, in the sense I used the term, it did not effect the controversy at all. The public must now judge how far I was from the truth; and they must also determine which of Mr. W’s statements is correct; that in the sermon, or that in the vindication; for they are no more alike than Methodism and Hopkinsianism: because, it is certain a man may be totally depraved *previous* to regene-

ration, and yet not remain so *until* regenerated. He may be favoured with spiritual light to convict him of sin, have a godly sorrow for sin, *previous* to regeneration—to all which a totally depraved sinner is an entire stranger; and therefore a sinner may not be totally depraved *until* regenerated, if we suppose him at the same time justified. Indeed, this is the only point of dissonance between us on this subject; for we never believed that men, when considered totally destitute of all the benefits of Redemption, or merely in a “natural state,” were not totally depraved.

But Mr. W. p. 57, has made a distinction between regeneration and justification, thus; “It is the *penitent believing* sinner whom God justifies; but he regenerates the *impenitent unbelieving* sinner.” From this it follows that an *impenitent unbelieving* sinner is made *holy*, is in the way to *life*, and so secure that he will infallibly be saved with life everlasting, *before* he is justified. Who would have believed, unless they had been informed in so many words, that any man supposed that an *impenitent unbelieving* sinner is a *saint*? And who would have imagined that a *saint*, having the “image of God impressed upon his heart,” is nevertheless in a state of condemnation, and yet *impenitent* and *unbelieving*? It was from the manifest absurdity of holding to such strange notions, that I was induced to believe that Mr. W. supposed a regenerated man is justified.

Understanding the term *justification* as *we* define it, as implying a pardon of actual sin, and a restoration to the favour of God through faith in Christ, Mr. W. agrees with us that sinners are *not* totally depraved *until* justified; and therefore I conclude that all my arguments in the letter on that subject, in support of that negative proposition, stand good. And, as this is the point, and the only point we

contend for on this subject, I see no necessity of continuing this part of our controversy any further. That this important doctrine is fully conceded by Mr. W. we have the most ample assurance from his own words in p. 57, where he says, "For we believe it as fully as he can"—"that men do not remain totally depraved *until justified*." And he certainly knows that this is the only point I advocated in my letter to him. This question therefore may be considered at rest between us. And I rejoice that an opportunity presents itself to declare our cordial assent to *one* point of Christian doctrine. Let the reader remember, and that he may, I repeat it, we agree that mankind are *not totally depraved until they are justified*.

Let us now examine Mr. W.'s definition of regeneration. He says that regeneration is a radical change of the heart from sin to holiness—that God does not pardon a sinner, that is, justify him, until he has made him a saint. To support this definition of regeneration, he quotes to Eph. ii. 1.— 'You hath he quickened, who were dead,' &c. and verse 4. 'even when we were dead,' &c. 'God quickened, or renewed, or regenerated, these sinners when they were dead in sin.'\* From these and similar sentences in his book, it appears he supposes that when the scriptures speak of *quickening*, *enlightening*, *convincing*, &c. they mean regeneration. If this be so, then the first visitation of divine grace to the heart, must be considered as effecting a radical change, or producing regeneration: and if it be proper to consider the first visitation of divine grace to the heart regeneration, then we agree with our opponent, that sinners are totally depraved until regene-

\* These quotations are taken from his manuscript letter before mentioned.

rated ; for, as before observed, we consider every man who is totally graceless, entirely sinful. But we wish it to be distinctly understood, that we do not think, that when the sacred writers speak of the *new-birth*, of being *washed in the laver of regeneration*, and of *being born of God* so as not to *commit sin*, that they mean the same as being enlightened, convicted, &c. and it is therefore that we conclude that a man is enlightened, or convicted, or quickened, before he is regenerated.

We grant there may be, and it is probable there ought to be, a distinction made between *regeneration* and *justification*; but we consider them so nearly connected in respect to *time*, that it is not absolutely necessary in theological works to keep up a distinction. The reason why we consider them so nearly connected is, that it seems incredible that a sinner should have his *heart* changed by the spirit of *holiness*, be born again from above, and yet be in a state of condemnation. We consider the scriptures to mean by *justification*, the acquitting a penitent believing sinner from the guilt of *actual sin*; so that, from being an ‘alien from the commonwealth of Israel,’ he has become a ‘fellow-citizen of the household of faith,’ taken into the favour of God, and considered in the relation of a child of God, and an heir of Jesus Christ; and we believe that the moment a sinner is thus justified freely by grace, he is also born of the Spirit, or regenerated. This is another reason why I confounded the terms in my letter to Mr. W.

Thus have I, with all the candour and impartiality of which I am master, endeavoured to exhibit a true statement of this part of our controversy. If I have failed, it has been for want of competent powers, or for want of clearer light. And from this statement it appears to me, that the principal difference between us and Mr. W. is, that we do

not use the word *regeneration* in the same sense. From the most deliberate view I have been able to take of this subject, I am induced to believe, that what we generally call *conviction for sin*, which is produced by the enlightening influence of the word and Spirit of God upon the sinner's heart, the Hopkinsians call *regeneration* :\* and if this disre-

\* That the reader may not suppose the suggested difficulty of understanding precisely what Mr. W. means by regeneration, is designed to perplex the subject, I will here transcribe a little of what he has written upon this subject. In p. 57, after having asserted that God "regenerates the impenitent and unbelieving sinner," he observes, "and this regenerating power of God is the very thing which makes him become a penitent, and a believer." According to this statement a sinner is regenerated before that penitence which results from a *conviction for sin*; and this *conviction for sin*, of course is not *antecedent* but *subsequenti* to regeneration; and hence regeneration must be the *first* work of the Holy Spirit upon this sinner's heart. And this is the way I understood him in his sermon, and the way in which I have generally understood the Hopkinsians upon this subject. But in p. 67. he seems to me, and I certainly do not wish to misapprehend him, to advance a directly opposite sentiment. He says, "We are far from calling the first serious impressions, of which sinners are the subjects, by the name of regeneration. No, we believe that sinners may not only be seriously impressed, but even deeply weighed down with conviction," &c. and still possess "that carnal mind which is enmity against God, and would dethrone him, if it was armed with sufficient power." When I read an author, I think myself bound to understand him according to the usual import of words, unless he define his sense of them to be different: and I believe all theological writers understand by *penitence* a godly sorrow for sin, which is produced by being *convicted* that we are sinners. Now in the first quoted passage, Mr. W. says, that this *penitence* is *subsequent* to regeneration; but in the latter, he says that sinners are so deeply *impressed* and *weighed down with conviction*, "as to spend all their time in reading the Bible, or in the closet, and in religious meetings," *antecedent* to regeneration. This *latter* opinion is *ours*; (with the exception of that dreadful desire to dethrone God) but he thinks that our sentiments upon total depravity are so heterodox, as to destroy the scriptural doctrine of human depravity! We therefore conclude, and not merely from this circumstance only, but from his general mode of argumentation, that the former sentiment is his settled opinion, namely, that *penitence and faith follow regeneration*. We furthermore think, that our difficulty in comprehending his meaning on this subject, claims some allowance from the obscure, and contradictory manner in which he has expressed it.

pance were merely verbal it would be unworthy of contention. But the great danger of supposing that the first operation of divine grace upon the heart is regeneration, is, that it serves to delude sinners into a belief that they are saints when they are not. Believing themselves saints, merely because they have been made sensible of the sinfulness of their hearts, and have had some sorrow for sin, and then adopting that other part of Hopkinsianism, the infallible perseverance of all such saints, the error must have a most fatal tendency. We all know how prone mankind are to flatter themselves with a false hope; to conclude that their spiritual state is good; and to persuade themselves that their final felicity is secured; and hence, (as Mr. Flavel somewhere observes, ‘If the principle will yield it, think not but that corrupt nature will catch at it,’) the imminent danger to which sinners are exposed who fancy themselves eternally secured in the immutable covenant of Redemption, merely because they have had a good desire, or some heart-rendings on account of their native vileness. It is on this account chiefly that we object to the Hopkinsian definition of regeneration, or the new-birth. If the holy scriptures teach, and we believe they do, that sinners are enlightened to see their sinfulness, have a godly sorrow produced, and have a hatred to sin excited in their hearts, *previous* to regeneration, then it must be extremely hazardous to teach them to believe that these are certain indications of their having been regenerated. The scriptures can teach no dangerous doctrine. They are directly calculated to lead mankind into the safest and surest way.

If total depravity be compatible with being under the invaluable privileges of the grand covenant of Redemption, the benefits of which extend to all men, so that a portion of grace is given to all in

the day of their probation, to enable them to repent and believe in Christ and lead a holy life, with the warnings of God's word and providence, the commanding motives of the gospel, and the invisible operation of the Holy Spirit—I say, if total depravity be compatible with all these distinguished favours, be it so—then will we believe that all men are totally depraved until regenerated. But we think that a man ought not to be considered totally depraved, totally vitiated by sin, and totally deprived of spiritual favours, *while* he enjoys so many unmerited favours from God, and while he is so far enlightened and influenced by gospel blessings. How can a man be *totally dark*, while blessed with so much *light*? How be totally vitiated by sin, while he has many good desires produced in his heart by the Holy Spirit, forms many good resolutions, avoids many evils, and might hearken to many good counsels? According to our perceptions of the new-birth, (and we believe our perceptions scriptural,) a sinner has all these merciful visitations *before* he is regenerated; and hence we conclude he is not totally deprived, nor totally depraved *until* he is regenerated or justified.

This was the point principally insisted upon in my letter to Mr. W. and I think I have given sufficient scripture authority for its defence, to only one of which has he replied: I therefore take for granted that the doctrine stands as an indisputable truth.

That this subject may be clearly understood, it is expedient to explain, as far as we are able, how, or in what sense, sinners are depraved. We do not suppose, that either Adam himself, nor any of his posterity, were deprived of any powers of the soul, nor that the soul itself was converted into sin, in consequence of original transgression. The faculties of the soul, (if it be proper to use that ap-

relative in reference to a simple uncompounded being) were neither destroyed, nor changed into sin ; but they were deprived of much of their original energy, and directed to improper objects. The soul has become, if we may so speak, overlaid with sin ; so that while under its dominion, unassisted by divine grace, the soul cannot exert itself in any thing that is evangelically good ; nor is it fit, while in this polluted state, for the enjoyment of God ; this moral pollution must be washed away ; and this is done in the laver of regeneration. To illustrate this idea, we will suppose a man to have precipitated himself from some eminence, by which the functions of his body are so enervated that he is unable to arise and walk ; and in his fall his garments are so torn that he is unfit for the society of his friends until he obtains a change of raiment : In this melancholy condition we suppose he must continue forever, unless some benevolent friend do that for him which he cannot do for himself. The moment however, that this friend raises him from his helpless situation, induces a circulation of the fluids by the application of suitable remedies, so that the unfortunate man is able to feel and move, some of the sad effects of his sudden fall are removed : and the moment he walks, he gives evidence that he is not now totally helpless ; although he is not yet restored to perfect health, nor is he fit to appear among his friends until he exchanges his tattered garments for a new suit. But such, we will suppose, is his poverty that he is entirely dependent upon the liberality of his friend for suitable clothing to introduce him to society.

Here is a representation of fallen Adam, and of all his posterity as they were then in his loins. And notwithstanding Jesus Christ did raise Adam from his totally helpless condition, yet, as this was an act of *divine grace*, and as his posterity have been propa-

gated by *natural generation*, it is scriptural and reasonable to conclude that they partake of the fallen depraved nature of their progenitors; and in this depraved state we suppose all are born into the world. Behold, then, man as having fallen by transgression, by which the energies of his mind are weakened, and his soul entirely defiled by sin. In this helpless and polluted condition, he must have remained forever, were it not for the benevolent interposition of Jesus Christ. In consequence of his amazing condescension, in rescuing man from the thraldom of the fall, all his unfortunate posterity are more or less favoured with the merciful visitations of grace previous to regeneration, by which the energies of their souls are strengthened, and they are capacitated to repent and believe in their benevolent Redeemer. But that they may be restored to perfect spiritual health, so as to walk in the way of God's commandments, and be fit for the society of the saints, they must have the healing balm of Jesus' blood applied to their hearts, have their filthy garments of iniquity taken off, and be clothed with the garments of salvation—this is done by justification and sanctification. Now, I conceive, the moment they are favoured with the smallest degree of grace, with the slightest touches of the Holy Spirit, to remove any of the darkness occasioned by original transgression, to communicate any degree of spiritual strength, some of the consequences of original depravity are removed; and therefore it is contended that they are not totally depraved until born of the Spirit.

Moreover, we do not suppose, that depravity or sinfulness, as such, is ever any otherwise than *total*. It suffers no change, no increase, nor diminution in its character. When a sinner is regenerated and justified, his depravity is not changed, nor subjugated. ‘The carnal mind is not subject-

to the law of God, neither indeed *can be.*' It was never designed to be subjugated to the kingdom of Christ. It must be totally destroyed. But in the destruction of carnality, the soul, which was contaminated with sin, is washed, and saved. The sinner, who, while under its influence and dominion, was depraved, is, in regeneration and justification, delivered from that depravity, and is brought under the dominion and influence of grace. But though depravity, as such, (if we can affix any determinate ideas to that term besides sinful propensities) is always total, possessing nothing good, yet the sinner himself is not always totally depraved : his heart is changed, and his soul washed from that moral pollution consequent upon original and actual sin. His heart, as well as his state, according to our view of the subject, is affected for the better, in consequence of the unconditional benefits of Redemption ; though his depravity, as such, is not affected, made no better, neither by the unconditional benefits of Redemption, nor by any of its conditional benefits. The least weight of alloy, is as much alloy, as if there were an hundred weight. This depravity, or sinfulness, was not the object of the divine philanthropy ; but the unhappy sinner who was under its influence, was an object of divine compassion. That depravity is not converted into holiness ; but the heart of the sinner is converted by the Spirit of holiness. Whatever of sinfulness we have, must, before we are fitted for the kingdom of heaven, be destroyed, and the soul which was infected with it, must be *washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb.* I know not that I can make this subject any plainer.

Mr. W. p. 63—65, complains that I have not met one of his arguments. I believe he is under a great mistake. The reader, however, who consults our works, must judge for himself. But, he

also observes, that I have not noticed those passages of scripture he quoted, by shewing, either that they were mis-quoted or mis-interpreted." This is true. But, as a candid disputant, he ought either to have noticed the reason I had assigned, and shewn it was insufficient to have excused me, or have said nothing about it. My reason for not examining his scripture quotations, was expressed in p. 86, thus : 'Indeed, the principal part of your sermon on total depravity, is entirely foreign to the point. For we know that mankind are wicked enough, and that their depravity is sufficiently manifest in their determined opposition to God.' And in p. 84. 'It is unnecessary to make any remarks upon the texts of scripture you have quoted to prove that mankind are depraved previous to regeneration, because this is a truth we never denied.'—And I am of the same sentiment now. His object in his sermon was, to prove that mankind, while "in a state of nature, *previous* to regeneration," are totally depraved ; and this doctrine we *never* denied, as I shall prove presently. Was not his sermon therefore as totally foreign to the point, as if he had undertaken to prove what he now acknowledges a truth, namely, *That they are not totally depraved until justified* : A truth this, for which we always contended.

But the object of Mr. W. is sufficiently obvious, both in his sermon, and in his vindication. He strives to impress the public with a belief that we are *Pelagians*, that we deny the *natural* and *original* depravity of the human race. Let not the reader be alarmed at this heavy accusation against our antagonist—The proof is at hand—and if it convict him of calumny, blame not the author. Mr. W. has given his book to the public ; and it is from that book that I shall adduce my proof. His unfounded accusation is the more inexcusable, as he

had our book of discipline and doctrine, and my letters before him, when he wrote ; and it is from these sources alone that I shall derive my evidence to support my charge against him.

If the reader will turn to p. 188 of Mr. W.'s book, he will find in a note the following words : "The doctrines which are now called Arminian, and which are advocated by the Methodists, appear to be substantially the same with those which were advanced by *Pelagius* in the beginning of the fifth century. He appeared to deny the original depravity of infants, and the total depravity of the unregenerate. He held to the independence and *self-determining* power of the will, and of course, denied the necessity of divine grace, directly to incline the will to that which is good, of course, excluded predestination, except what is founded in the foreknowledge of man's faith and obedience.—He also held to a sinless perfection in this life. (See Milner's Church Hist. Vol. 2.) These sentiments were then considered by Augustine, and the church in general, not only as errors, but as very fundamental errors, such as greatly tended to destroy the grace of God in our salvation." In regard to the sentiments of *Pelagius*, I believe we have no particular account of them, except what we derive from his enemies, *his* writings being all destroyed. And if *his* enemies, Augustine and others, who have transmitted his doctrines to us, had no more regard to candour and truth, than Mr. W. has evinced in the preceding quotation, it is presumed we have but a mutilated account of him, and of his doctrines. Were all our writings destroyed, and posterity should know nothing more of us than what they might collect from such unsupported assertions as Mr. W. has made, it might be concluded that we also denied some of the most important doctrines of the gospel. However, from

the imperfect account we have of Pelagianism, it does appear that its author denied the original depravity of infants, and the total depravity of unawakened sinners, the necessity of divine grace, &c. and Mr. W. tells his readers that our doctrines are *substantially* the same.

It is easy at this distant period, under the circumstances before mentioned, to misrepresent *Pelagius*; but how any man should have so little regard to his own reputation, as to publish such manifest errors, (might I not justly say such palpable falsehoods?) against a people so well-known as the Methodists are, by their established articles of faith, their approved publications, the number of their Preachers and people, scattered all over the continent of America, in various parts of Europe, in some parts of Asia and Africa, it is difficult to conceive. In this instance I think our accuser has exhibited a striking evidence, if not of total depravity, yet of prejudice and prepossession.

But says he, "The Methodists deny the original depravity of infants." This accusation is denied: and as he has adduced no proof, neither from the articles of our church, nor from any of our approved authors, *justice* does not demand from me to support my denial by testimony. However, for the satisfaction of my readers, I will attempt to do it, both from our Discipline and my letters to him.

#### ARTICLE VII. 'Of Original or Birth Sin.'

'Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam, (as the *Pelagians* do vainly talk) but is the corruption of the *nature* of every man, that *naturally* is engendered of the *offspring* of Adam, whereby man is *very* far gone from *original righteousness*, and of his *own nature* inclined to *evil*, and that continually.'

The language of this article is such, that it needs no comment. It is as pointed against the reputed doctrine of *Pelagius*, as words can make it; and therefore is as ample testimony against Mr. W's candour, as any impartial judge can require. Reader, you are, I hope, that judge. And lest you should suppose that the present author is at variance with the article of the church of which he is a member, you are referred to p. 93 of his letters to Mr. W. There you will find the following words : 'With Mr. W. we believe, apostate Adam begat a son in his own fallen, depraved likeness ; and that all who are born into the world possess nothing morally good, which they inherited from their ancestors.' Again, p. 94. 'Not that we inherit a sanctified *nature* by *natural* generation. On the contrary, this *nature* is corrupt and *sinful* ; and when viewed in relation to the Adamic law, deserves the wrath of God.' By these quotations the judge to whom I have appealed, will, I apprehend, acquit me of slander, if I say Mr. W's accusation is unsupported.

He also asserts, That we deny "the total depravity of the unregenerate." How far this accusation is true, the reader must determine after having attentively perused the preceding pages upon that subject, and comparing what he there reads with p. p. 93, 94 of the "Errors of Hopkinsianism."

The Methodists hold "to the independence and *self-determining* power of the will, and of course deny the necessity of divine grace, directly to incline the will to that which is good." We pronounce this a groundless accusation ; and to prove that it is so, we appeal to Article viii. 'OF FREE WILL.' 'The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he *cannot* turn and prepare himself by *his own natural strength* and works of faith

and calling upon God: Wherefore we have *no power* to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, *without the grace of God by Christ* preventing us, that we may have a *good will*, and *working with us* when we *have that good will*? Can any words more pointedly contradict the accusation of our opponent? And that my own sentiments were in perfect harmony with the doctrine of that article, may be seen by the following quotation from my letters, p. 244. ‘The scripture doctrine of perseverance which we advocate, asserts, that the *grace of repentance*, the *power* to believe, and the *ability* to love and obey, are all gratuitously bestowed upon man; so that, were they withheld, no one could make his calling and election sure.’— And now reader the evidence is before you. *Judge righteous judgment.* In respect to what is said about “predestination” and “sinless perfection in this life,” it will be noticed in another place.

Perhaps some may say, I ought to use softer language, and not bluntly accuse Mr. W. with erroneous statements. To such I would reply, Are not his accusations without foundation? If they are, were I to disguise them, and say I hope they are not so, I should be guilty of the very crime of which I accuse him. Honesty and candour therefore compel me on this occasion to use plain words. I would gladly apologize for him, if I could. But he has deprived me of the privilege. He had, as he has informed us, my letters, and our book of doctrines and discipline before him when he wrote. To say he was ignorant of our doctrines, when he had before his eyes the very books from which I have quoted to disprove his charges, is to reproach him with a defect, not much less criminal than to accuse him of wilful abuse. He may, however, apologize for his misrepresentations, several more of which will be pointed out, in the way which suits

him best ; confess ignorance, or acknowledge wilful misrepresentation. While writing against his sermons, I thought I could honestly excuse his erroneous statements, from his want of information, his inattention, or prejudice. Many such misrepresentations I charged him with, for which he has neither offered an apology, nor acknowledged them with frankness. They shall be noted in their proper place.

Another instance of his disengenuous method of argumentation, occurs in p. 60. In my letter to him, I observed, ‘The *foundation* of our obligation is the relation in which we stand to God as his creatures—but he never can, consistently with his nature as a just and benevolent being, require us to fulfil that obligation without affording all proper assistance. Moreover, it is utterly impossible in the nature of things, to require us to see without light, to hear without sound, or to love without grace.’ Remarking upon this passage, he asks, “How much grace is proper assistance to render us obliged?” Now did he not know that I had just said, that the *foundation* of our obligation existed antecedent to any redeeming grace? that it is founded in our ‘*relation* to God as his creatures?’ It is not, therefore, the grace of the gospel which lays the *foundation* of moral obligation, or which “renders us obliged.” It is believed that Mr. W. misapprehended me in that paragraph, as his observations have no bearing at all upon my argument. I will endeavour, therefore, to make my meaning more perspicuous. I consider then that the *foundation* of moral *obligation* is the *relation* in which we stand to God, and to one another as fellow-citizens, as rulers and subjects, husband and wife, parents and children, masters and servants, &c. &c. From these various *relations* originate certain moral duties peculiar to each relation, and binding

upon all intelligent beings. And so long as this relation exists, so long the obligation, both as to its foundation, nature and extent, must remain.— These various *relations*, the *knowledge* of them, the various *duties* resulting from them, and the *means* of fulfilling them, all flow from the good pleasure of God, which is also guided and directed by the rectitude of His own infinite mind.— This *good pleasure* of God has been manifested in the law and the gospel, in which he has been pleased to manifest his infinite *good will*, in revealing to man the knowledge of his relation to his Creator, to discriminate the various duties which result from man's relative situation; and also, through the mediation of Jesus Christ, to furnish man with the most ample means to fulfil his obligation to God, and to his fellow creature.

The *foundation* of moral obligation, the *knowledge* of it, and the means and manner of *fulfilling* it, are totally distinct things. The *foundation* is the mutual relation subsisting among moral beings. We come to the *knowledge* of this relation, and the various duties resulting from it, by the revelation of God's will. We are furnished with *ability* and the means of fulfilling it, by the grace of God in Christ Jesus. To illustrate this idea: The obligation of a child to obey its parents originates from the relation subsisting between parents and children. This is its *foundation*. The various duties originating from this foundation are *made known* by the revelation of God's will, and the means of discharging them are furnished by the gospel of Jesus Christ. But this relation is mutual; and therefore there are mutual duties originating from it. Were a parent to command his son, fourteen years of age, to bring him a cup of water, at first view we should all say it is the duty of the son to obey, because it is the duty of children to obey the command of

their parents : But if, upon enquiry, it were ascertained there was no water to be had, or no vessel to convey it, or the child has no feet or hands to help himself ; if either, or all these impediments were in the way, no one would hesitate to decide, that the son is exempted from the obligation to obey in *that particular case* ; although still, it is the duty of that son to obey his father, because he is his son ; and he is only exempted in that particular case, on the supposition that a wise and benevolent father would not insist upon obedience under such circumstances : if he should, he would evince to the world, that he was destitute of the qualifications of a paternal ruler, and should be deprived of his authority.

Apply this simile to the subject under consideration. Sinners, it is said, are totally depraved—that is, in consequence of Adam's sin, they are totally unable to love God, as it is their duty to do : yet, say the Hopkinsians, God has a right to demand their love, although they have no moral power, and are not furnished with any means to obey. On the contrary, we say, that God, who is infinitely wise and *good*, will not, *because* he is possessed of those perfections, require them to obey, without affording them all proper assistance. Take a single instance. Suppose there is one reprobate, for whom Christ died, but had no intention of saving him, and to whom no gracious ability to repent or believe in Christ was ever given. And his *inability* with all its effects, has been induced by the effective decree of God, or by a divine constitution is made to result from the sin of Adam, in which this reprobate had no active nor responsible agency ; can either *justice* or *goodness* require the condemnation of this reprobate for an *inability* which is perfectly pleasing to God, and which he designed should forever prevent this reprobate from loving

him? I think not. He has neither a natural, moral, nor *gracious* ability; and he has not brought this inability upon himself, by his own actual sin; of course the utter impossibility of obeying exempts him in that particular instance.\* But in this deplorable state the Hopkinsians represent all the reprobates. God, according to them, originally decreed that they should be cursed with this inability, and he absolutely refuses to afford them any kind of assistance; and yet, say they, he commands them all to repent, regenerate themselves, believe in Christ, and become holy by their own natural strength. Although they can be under no obligation under such impossible circumstances to obey, yet we believe all men are under obligation to love and obey God, from the *relation* in which they stand to Him as his creatures; and they are all *able* to obey him because all men are *empowered* through the atoning merits of Christ so to do: and hence, if they do not, the unhappy consequence resulting from their wilful disobedience, is chargeable only on themselves: there was no absolute decree, no invincible moral inability, nor no im-

\* The reader is requested to restrict the application of this reasoning to probationers. In respect to those who have once had a probationary state, but have abused it until their day of grace is over, *their* incapacity to obey furnishes no just excuse for their disobedience. They *once* had an ability to have loved God, which they might have improved. And they are now justly condemned for having *abused* their active powers, in so sinning against God as to outstand the day of their merciful visitation. This observation will apply also to devils, as well as to all the miserable in hell. It is believed that they are under as much obligation to love God now, as ever they were, although they cannot: but the reason why they are justly punishable for not fulfilling that obligation is, because they did not use their high privileges which they once had, as they should and might have done. But in respect to Hopkinsian reprobates, their case is widely different. According to that theory, these poor reprobates were destined for damnation from all eternity.—They never had, say the advocates of that system, any *moral ability* to repent, believe in Christ, or to love God, although they had natural ability to do so.

pediment from want of an intention in Christ to save them, to prevent their salvation.

But even allowing that a command under such circumstances were *just*, still it is impossible such a command should be given by the God of the bible, because he is also a being of infinite *goodness*.

It is impossible that our God should give such a command to probationers under such circumstances, because there are *no* probationers under such circumstances. Whatever quantum of depravity mankind may have derived from Adam, and how much soever it may accumulate during their probationary state, it is undeniably true, that Jesus Christ *has* come, that he *has* made atonement for all men, not excepting one; the *true light every where* shines, among Christians, Jews, and heathens; a portion of *divine grace* is given to *all* men without exception; and *all* men are *hereby empowered* to see the light of truth, the foundation and nature of moral obligation; and all who live under the light of the gospel, may see the necessity and nature of evangelical repentance and faith in Christ. Now, if *Christ tasted death for every man*, as the scriptures abundantly assert, and if a portion of *divine grace* be given to *all* men, as they also testify, how is it possible for *any* man to be required to repent without grace, or to believe in Christ when he did not die for him. If *all* men, through the benefits of Redemption are *empowered*, during their probationary state, to comply with the requisitions of the gospel, how can they be required to comply with them *without* being so empowered? It is certainly impossible.

I wish to make this matter plain to every reader, not only because it was evaded by Mr. W. but also, because it completely destroys the possibility of *any* man being required to love God *without grace*. And, to illustrate it, we will suppose a man

were asked at mid-day, Can you see without eyes, and without the light of the sun? 'No.' But why? If he understand the end the enquirer has in view, he would answer, 'Because, I have the perfect use of my eyes, and because the sun now shines, and exhibits the objects of sense to my vision.' It will be perceived by the attentive reader, that the enquiry is not, whether this man could see if the light of the sun were withdrawn; but whether, *while* the sun shines he can see *without* its light; and every one must acknowledge that it is naturally and totally impossible. And, it is equally impossible to require a man, under such circumstances, to see without eyes, and without the light of the sun.

Just so, *while* the Sun of Righteousness shines upon the moral world, and *while* the grace of the gospel visits the hearts of sinners, it is as impossible for the sinner to see spiritual objects without his enlightening beams, or to believe in Christ *without grace*, as it is for me, *while* the pen is in my hand, to write without it. Now, since the *true light* every where shines, and the *grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men*, God *cannot command*, nor *require* any man totally depraved, to repent, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ without affording a gracious power to comply with the requisition. And this is the point of view in which the argument, at which Mr. W. took such an evasive look, was presented.

In p. 54, and 62, he attempts to remove the contradiction, in which I believed he had involved himself by contending that all men are totally depraved until regenerated, and then by conceding they are *convicted of sin before regeneration*; and by saying also, that *before regeneration*, things are "preparing in divine providence for sinners to see themselves entirely sinful." But notwithstanding

all he has said, it yet appears to me that the contradiction really exists. To shew, however, that it does not, he observes, p. 62. "Are not sinners, even under the gospel *stupid* as well as *depraved*?" We answer, yes; they are *stupid* enough. But is not that *stupidity* one of the component parts of depravity? I think it must belong to *depravity*, or to holiness: and I presume it will not be said that it belongs to the latter. *Stupidity*, then, is essential to a *totally* depraved state; and this stupefaction continues just so long as the sinner remains *totally* depraved. It follows, therefore, that whenever they are "aroused out of this stupidity to see on what a slippery steep they go." (p. 62.) they are not at that *time totally* depraved: or, when they are "awakened by conviction to see themselves," some of the sad concomitants of depravity are removed. Some of the strongest expressions used by the Holy Spirit to describe the depravity of man, are, '*blindness of mind*,' '*hardness of heart*,' 'thou that *sleepest*;' and they are represented by the prophet Isaiah, as being more *stupidly ignorant* of God, than 'the ox that knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib;' therefore, when that *blindness* is so far removed that the sinner "sees himself," and "admires the exceeding grace of God;" when he is "aroused from his *stupidity*," and his ignorance so far removed, by "awakening and conviction," that he knows his danger, he is not, at the *same time totally* depraved, that is *totally stupid*, blind, and ignorant: And hence it follows that whenever the Hopkinsians concede that sinners are thus "aroused," "enlightened" and "awakened" *previous* to regeneration, they virtually acknowledge that sinners are not *totally* depraved *until* regenerated.

I know, as he remarks, p. 61. that he did not *design* to give up total depravity. I believe the doc-

trine is exceedingly dear to his heart ; and that he will, as he has said, renounce every sentence he has written to contradict it, if his reputation as an author, and the consistency of his system can also be maintained ; but these are likewise very dear to him ; and therefore he “ labours exceedingly,” to reconcile the different parts of his system, and to defend himself from the imputation of inconsistency. It is difficult, however, to reconcile contradictions. The fact is, as I said, in my letter to him ; ‘a ray of light providentially intercepted the mist of error which his heterogeneous system raised about his soul ; and his pen in a happy moment recorded it,’ to the honour of truth, and to the confusion of error.

Mr. W. likewise, in p. 53, complains of me for devoting “nearly two pages more, to expose the glaring absurdity of a regenerated totally depraved sinner”—and asks, in reply, “Is it any absurdity for a regenerated man to tell what his character was before regeneration ?” No ; but the Hopkinsians do not allow that St. Paul in the seventh of Romans was relating what he *had been*, while an unconverted Jew ; but they contend, and Mr. W. among the rest, in his sermon on “sinful imperfection,” that the Apostle in that chapter was relating what he *then* was, as an apostolic christian. If so, and if *total* depravity is taught in the text taken from that chapter, and if it was his present experience, then he was a totally depraved saint.

I know, that in his sermon, on total depravity, Mr. W. refers to what St. Paul said, ‘I know that in me, (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing,’ to all unrenewed men ; and supposes that the apostle meant his unrenewed part, so that both the *old* and *new* man was in him at that time. The same sentiment is expressed in the vindication, p. 33. “If there is now an *old* and a *new* man within him,

is there any thing in itself contradictory, that he should now tell what the nature or character of the old man is, though he should not, at the same breath, say any thing about the nature or character of the new man?" From these words, it is evident that Mr. W. supposes the apostle, in the seventh of Romans, was describing both the *old* and the *new* man ;—by the *flesh* he meant the *old* man, and by the *spirit*, the *new* man : and if the *old man* totally depraved, and the *new man* totally renewed, were in St. Paul at the same time, was he not totally depraved, and totally holy at the same time ? especially, if by the *old man* he meant to designate what the Calvinists call *total depravity* ?

We are not accountable for the contradictions of our opponents. If at one time, to vindicate one part of their system, they so explain the seventh of Romans, as to make the apostle refer to what he *was before* a saint ; and then, to support another link in their immense chain of decrees, they apply what he has there said, to him *after* he became a saint ; must we be blamed for their absurdities, or reprimanded for exposing them. Let them embrace a consistent scheme of doctrines, and they may avoid the mortification of having their absurdities detected. I repeat it therefore, that the vindicator of universal decrees, represents St. Paul, as a totally depraved—regenerated—saint—sinner.—What will come next? "Sophomores?" that is "wise fools?" p. 118.

Neither are we responsible for the number of pages occupied in exposing such absurdities. Is the mechanic to blame for being a whole season in rebuilding a house which some incendiary was instrumental in consuming in a few minutes? It requires but a short time to make bold assertions ; but much labour is frequently requisite to refute them, in order to prevent their pernicious tendency.

cy. Let this consideration be an apology for spending so much time in this wearisome controversy. This part of it shall be closed by referring the reader to my second letter to Mr. Williston, for the scripture authority for our views upon human depravity.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### *On the Scripture doctrine of Election.*

IN my letter to Mr. Williston on this doctrine, I observed, p. 92. ‘Your labouring to prove that election is not *founded* upon *works foreseen*, is calculated to impress the reader with an idea that we believe it is. This sentiment, you know was not advocated in the debate.’ In reply to this, Mr. W. observes in his vindication, “Certainly I did suppose—that the Methodists—believed that election was founded on works foreseen; nor did I hear any thing offered by Mr. B. in the public debate, nor do I see any thing in his letters to lead me to alter the opinion I had formed.” I am extremely sorry to be under the necessity, for the vindication of truth, to contradict so many things my opponent has asserted. If none were to suffer from such erroneous statements but myself, they should pass unnoticed: but as truth, and a large body of professing Christians are suffering by such representations, duty excites me to correct them. That this may be done on the present occasion, it is necessary to advert to circumstances which took place at the public debate, which otherwise would have been gladly passed over in silence.

Mr. W. affirms that he heard nothing in that debate to induce him to believe we did not hold that election was founded on works. Appealing to his candour and honesty for the truth of what I relate, I will now remind him, that the day preceding the debate, Mr. Benedict and myself met, in company with several gentlemen, at Mr. Williston's lodgings, to fix upon the preliminaries of the debate, and the points of doctrine to be discussed. After much conversation, which originated from Mr. Benedict's unwillingness to investigate the Calvinistic doctrine of foreordination; and after finally agreeing upon the two first points, the doctrine of election came next in order. As the points to be discussed were proposed in the form of questions, Mr. Benedict wrote and proposed the following : ' Has God elected a certain number of the human family to eternal life, without any regard to their works as the *foundation* of their election ?' To this I objected, because it did not embrace his sentiments nor mine ; and proposed to insert the word *condition* instead of *foundation*. To this *he* objected, because he said he believed Christ died for all men, and that those only would be saved who complied with the *condition* of salvation.

After much conversation, the Rev. Mr. Fenn of Harpersfield proposed this question, *What is the scripture doctrine of Election?* to which we agreed.

The next day, when we came to the discussion of this doctrine, Mr. Benedict arose, and repeated the above question, which had been laid aside. I then informed the congregation that *that* question had been under consideration the day before, and by mutual consent laid aside ; and, as it did not express my sentiments nor his, I could have nothing to say to it ; also, that unless my antagonist would abandon that ground, I could have nothing more to say on the subject. He then said to me,

'Write one yourself.' I then wrote and read, 'I believe Christ died for all men, and that whosoever will, may be saved.' Mr. Benedict then arose and said 'agreed.' I then requested the congregation to take notice that Mr. Benedict agreed with me, and therefore renounced Calvinism. Mr. Williston, my present polemic, then arose and said, "Mr. Benedict do come out—come out I beseech of you." 'Well,' said he, 'if it be thought best I will.' Accordingly, as near as I can recollect, he expressed himself as follows—'I believe God from all eternity elected a certain number to eternal life, not because he foresaw they would repent and believe, but because he would; and that he reprobated all the rest to eternal burnings, not because he foresaw them sinners, but because he would!' This, thought I, is "coming out," with a witness. This is as accurate an account of this matter, as I am able to give. I believe some of the persons then present, can remember the circumstances. If Mr. Williston retains them, I call upon him, in the fear of God, as he will have to answer at the great day, to confess the truth, and clear us of the scandal he has attempted to pour upon us, by misstating our sentiments upon this subject.—Let him lay his hand upon his breast, and, if he dare, contradict the above facts. When he has done it, it will, I believe, be no difficult matter for me to prove them. A consciousness of truth and honesty makes me bold, and a sense of responsibility has made me cautious. I do not, indeed, affirm that I have every *expression* as was then used; but that it is *substantially* correct, I am fully convinced; and especially the emphatical words *foundation* and *condition*; because the circumstances made a deep and lasting impression on my mind; and Mr. Benedict's conduct on that occasion seemed exceeding strange, and was the sub-

ject of much animadversion; because it was well known that the Calvinists held to the doctrine of unconditional election.

This being as true a state of the case as I am able to give, I will now lay before the reader the reasons why I objected to Mr. Benedict's question, and shew, as plain as I can, that we do not make works, of any kind, the *foundation* either of our election or salvation.

The reason then why we object to that phraseology is, because we believe the *foundation* of our election is the infinite *goodness* or *love of God* manifested in Christ Jesus, and because we perceive a material difference between the *foundation* and the *condition* of our *salvation*. Suppose you were to see a man in danger of precipitating himself into some dreadful gulf, from which danger he could not extricate himself; and you were to pledge yourself to deliver him, if he would take hold of your hand—Would the *foundation* of his deliverance be in your goodness and power, or in his taking hold of your hand? His taking hold of your hand is the *condition* on which the unfortunate man is delivered: but if your goodness had not first prompted you to offer him deliverance on this easy condition; and if your power had not been exerted in his behalf, he might have struggled in vain to save himself. His deliverance then *primarily* depended upon your goodness in making the offer, and on your power and faithfulness, in fulfilling your promise. Even so—Nay more—does the salvation of the elect depend upon the goodness, power, and faithfulness of God, as to its origin or *foundation*. The gift of Jesus Christ, without which no one could have been saved, originated from pure benevolence: here is the proper foundation, as saith St. Paul: ‘Other *foundation* can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus.’ Sinners, as they

existed in Adam, were all hanging over the dismal abyss of perdition. To prevent them from precipitating themselves into it, the wings of eternal love flew to their rescue—God gave his only Son a ransom for them all—by which a broad and permanent *foundation* was laid for them to build their hopes of happiness upon.

And this ‘unspeakable gift’ depended, in no sense, upon any work, merit, or condition of man; it came unsought, unasked, and unmerited; it originated entirely in the good pleasure, and unbounded benevolence of the triune God. So also the first visitations of the Word and Spirit to the hearts of sinners, now flow from the infinite good pleasure of God, unsought and unmerited by man, depending upon no conditions by man performed: but, that man may receive the full benefit of pardon and sanctification, he is required to repent, believe in Jesus Christ as his Almighty Redeemer, and *walk in the light as he is in the light.*

Now we ask—from whence did it originate that God devised and executed such an admirable scheme, so perfectly adapted to harmonize and illustrate the divine perfections, and suited with such exactitude to the condition of man? Whence originated that offer of eternal salvation upon *conditions* so small and insignificant in themselves, when compared to the greatness and infinite value of that salvation, which penitent, believing, and obedient sinners receive? We answer, from the *infinite goodness* of God: *This is its source.* It was unbounded goodness, or eternal love, that brought Jesus Christ, our adored Saviour, from heaven, to cover himself with shame and ignominy, to expire amid surrounding wonders, and the most exquisite pangs, that he might *atone for the sin of the world.* Let angels adore with wonder and astonishment! Let devils tremble! Let saints shout, and sinners

hear, fear, and exultingly return unto God—while they meditate upon the stupendous love, which led Christ to the bloody cross! Was the decree of reprobation executed at this awful moment, when the mighty Saviour uttered his expiring groan? No; but the decree of universal love was exemplified, and demonstrated in the view of both worlds.—What heart can avoid dilating with gratitude while meditating upon these scenes where *justice* and *grace* are beheld so delightfully harmonizing. Yes, and it is *goodness* which now moves the holy Trinity to awaken and enlighten sinners, to reveal the way of life and salvation to them, to enable them to accept of pardon and salvation upon those terms which the same property of the divine nature had accommodated to the weak, polluted, and guilty condition of man. It is this same eternal goodness and power, which pardons, sanctifies, defends, succours, comforts and delivers God's people in this world of sin, pollution, dangers, sorrows, and difficulties. Here then we see the *foundation*, the fountain, or source of our present and future felicity. But the conditions on which we receive pardon, sanctification, and final salvation, are repentance, faith, and perseverance in a holy life to the end of our probationary existence. Now, it is presumed, that if Mr. W. cannot see any reason to alter his opinion, the impartial reader will conclude that, to satisfy his conscience, he ought.

From what has been said, it will be perceived that we neither *found* election upon *works* foreseen, nor upon *foreknowledge*. It is true this election is *predicated*, that is *declared* or *affirmed* of foreknowledge: but foreknowledge is not its *foundation* or source, any more than works, whether of piety or mercy. Foreknowledge *sees* those who will be benefited by that grace which flows from the abundant goodness of God; and accordingly the in-

spired writers affirm that the ‘saints were *elected according*’ that is in exact conformity ‘to the fore-knowledge of God through sanctification of the Spirit.’

But Mr. W. affirms that there is nothing in my book that has led him to suppose we did not make works the *foundation* of our election. Were I certain that all our readers could have access to that book, I would only refer them to it, that they might see with what prejudice, or inattention, our opponent has read it. Lest, however, this should not be the case, I will here transcribe a little from p. p. 108, 109. ‘If a beggar were to receive from the hands of a wealthy benevolent man, something to supply his wants, does it follow that the *act* of the beggar in receiving the gratuitous donation from his benefactor, is the *foundation* or *meritorious cause* of his subsistence? By no means. The *benevolence* of the donor, and not the *act* of the beggar, is the *source* of the poor man’s subsistence.’—‘The *source* of all the favours bestowed on fallen man, is in the plenitude of divine goodness. It was infinite condescension in God that caused him to provide a Saviour for sinners, and to accommodate the terms of acceptance and salvation to the weakness of man. The question is not, therefore, as your readers might infer, whether our election to eternal life be predicated of *works* or of *grace*; but whether *grace*, the grace of eternal life, be unconditionally bestowed on some, and whether all the rest be unconditionally reprobated to eternal death, without any respect to their wicked works. All the scriptures therefore which you have quoted to prove that *grace* is the *first* and *moving cause* of our salvation, make nothing against us; and all you say against *works* being the *foundation* of our election, is wide of the point, as we never held they were! If the scales of prejudice have not entirely blinded

the eyes of his understanding, if he read this quotation, I hope it will make so deep an impression as to induce Mr. W. to alter his opinion, and retract his unsupported assertions. Unsupported assertions! Have I not supported them by quotations from your book of discipline?

I believe not, Sir: Let us, however, attend to this point. The first passage he has referred to is the following, p. 62. ‘The scriptures tell us plainly what predestination is: it is God’s fore appointing obedient believers to salvation, not without, but according to his foreknowledge of all their works from the foundation of the world’—‘If the elect are chosen through sanctification of the Spirit, then they are not chosen before they are sanctified by the Spirit.’ From these passages Mr. Williston concludes that we “build electing love on good works foreseen.” But I believe it will be very difficult for any considerate person to perceive from what part of those arguments he has drawn his conclusion: it being manifest that the author says not one word about the *original cause*, but only speaks of the *time* and the *means* of our election. We could wish that our enemies would pay a little more attention to the meaning of words, especially those which ought to be, and are, emphatical. I fear we shall appear ridiculous in the estimation of an enlightened public, by being under the necessity of descending to such minute explanations, as though we suspected the understandings of our readers.

Mr. Wesley’s argument, in the above quotation, is this; St. Paul affirms that the saints are *elected* through *sanctification of the Spirit*; but inasmuch as they could not be sanctified *before* they were born; therefore they were not elected in *eternity*, but in *time*, when they were sanctified. He says not one word respecting the *foundation*, or *origin*—

*al cause* of election, in either of the passages Mr. W. has quoted.

Why did he not quote the following, which stand so closely connected with those he did quote, and which speak directly of the *foundation* or *cause* of election? The reason is obvious to every impartial mind. They prove directly against Mr. Williston's assertion, and inference. The reader shall judge. 'I do not hold that' (faith and obedience) 'is the *cause for* which he elects any; the contrary of this is easily shewn thus: Suppose my obedience the cause of my election to (eternal) salvation, What is the cause of my obedience? Answer: My love to Christ. But what is the cause of my love to Christ? Answer: My faith in Christ. But what is the cause of my faith in Christ? Answer: The preaching of the gospel of Christ. But what is the cause of the preaching of the gospel of Christ? Answer: Christ dying for us. But what is the cause of Christ dying for us? Answer: God's great love of pity, wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins. Thus all men may see that I do not hold, God chose any man to life and salvation for any good which he had done, or for any which was in him, before he put it there.' These sentiments of Mr. Wesley are all supported by apposite texts of scripture, which the reader may see, either by looking in the Discipline published in 1808, or in a small book called *Doctrinal Tracts*, published by the Methodists. In page 66 of the Discipline, are these words: 'God's love was the *cause* of his sending his Son to die for us. Christ's dying for sinners is the *cause* of the gospel being preached. The preaching of the gospel is the *cause*, or means of our believing. Our believing is the *cause*, or condition of our justification.'

The reader may now decide what credit is due to Mr. W's bold affirmation, that we make works

foreseen the *foundation* of our salvation. Is not the *original cause* the proper *foundation*, ascribed by Mr. Wesley in the above quotations, to the *love of God*? and also carefully, and scripturally distinguished from the *conditional* or *instrumental* cause of justification, and eternal glory?

But, says Mr. Williston, p. 75, "It is objected by our theological antagonists, That there is more than one passage where predestination is explicitly ascribed to foreknowledge, and made to rest upon it."\* Here is another grand mistake. We have *no where* said that predestination *rests* upon foreknowledge, or is *ascribed* to it. It no more rests upon it, than Mr. Williston's book *rests* on my eye, merely because I *see* it. I *affirm* that there *is* such a book, containing a number of mistaken assertions, because I *see*, and therefore *know* it; but because I *see* that book, and read those assertions, does it follow that I *wrote* the book, and am the *cause* of

\* Mr. Williston had, I grant, some reason for the above assertion, from a sentence in my book, (which, however, he has not referred to,) p. 423; where it is said 'Whatever election the apostle had in view, it is certain he founded it upon *prescience*.' Here the word *founded* is used in an improper sense, and conveys a different idea from what I intended, although it conveys no idea of election being *founded* upon *works* foreseen. This inaccuracy is corrected in a revised copy, I have to print by, if a second edition of that work should be called for. Instead of reading, that the apostle *founded* election upon *prescience*, it now reads, he *predicated* or *affirmed* it of *prescience*. But if Mr. Williston had attended to what is written p. p. 108, 109, of my letters to him, he might have seen that we utterly disclaim the pharaonic doctrine of salvation by works, whether of obedience to law, or of repentance and faith. Considering, however, the inaccuracy above noticed in the use of the word *founded*, I excuse Mr. W. in saying that I have *founded* election upon foreknowledge. But I wish him also to accept of this explanation; and request him in future to understand us according to our meaning, which may be gathered from our leading principles, and not from an expression inadvertently used in an improper sense. For the sentiments we hold, we ask no mercy, no favour. If they be heterodox, let them be rooted from the church: the sooner the better.

those assertions ? I also see our discipline, from which I have made the above quotations to refute Mr. W's misstatements of our doctrines, and of which I highly approve ; and therefore I *affirm* that there is such a book ; and this affirmation is predicated of my *knowledge* that such a book exists : but does it hence follow that the book itself must be *ascribed* to my knowledge, and be made to *rest* on my eye ? God, according to the language of inspiration, foresaw who *would* believe, and who *would not* ; and hence it is said that election and salvation is *predicated* or *affirmed* of that knowledge, and not that it rests *upon* it.

To make this subject intelligible to every reader, let us ask ; How came God to know how many or how any would be saved ? Answer 1. Because his infinite *goodness* inclined him to provide a Saviour, and all necessary means for their salvation. 2. Because infinite knowledge, being one of the perfections of his nature, it enabled him to see and know who would, and who would not, accept of that Saviour, and submit to his prescribed method of salvation. Prescience, therefore, although it beheld the whole system of events, good and bad, did not *produce* them. No, it was *love*, mighty love, or unbounded goodness, that induced our benevolent God to condescend to choose those for himself, whom he foresaw would yield to the gracious terms of salvation. ‘Herein is love, not that we (first) loved God, but that He (first) loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins.’

Now, for the sake of truth and candour, and for the honour of our religion, I hope we may hear no more the stale charge reiterated, that we make *works* the *foundation* of our election. If, however, any choose still to report this slander, a simple advertisement of its untruth is all the reply they will deserve.

In p. 86, Mr. W. says he thinks I do not "understand them when they speak of election as being unconditional." It may be so. But I believe it is not very difficult to understand them unless they pervert language. I understand by Calvinistic election, that God, from all eternity chose a certain number of men and angels, to eternal life, and that he eternally reprobated all the rest to eternal burnings ; and I understand by *unconditional* something *without any conditions* ; and therefore by *unconditional election* I understand that God according to his own sovereign pleasure, elected a certain number of his intelligent beings to eternal life, entirely independent of any conditions by them performed ; but that certain conditions, such as repentance, faith and obedience flow from this decree of election as the fruits of it ; and that God, according to his own sovereign pleasure reprobated *unconditionally* all the rest of his intelligent beings to eternal torments, without any condition by them performed ; but that certain conditions, such as impenitence, unbelief, disobedience, &c. flow from this unconditional decree of reprobation, as the fruits of it. If this be not a true definition, then, I confess, I do not understand them.

Now I know of no medium between *unconditional* and *conditional* election : The latter we believe ; but the Calvinists *oppose us* ; therefore they cannot believe in *conditional* election : they must then believe in *unconditional* election. However, Mr. W. says, p. 87, that I have stated the question wrong in saying, 'The question is, whether grace, the grace of eternal life be *unconditionally* bestowed on some : He says, 'I think this is far from being the question : God bestows the grace of eternal life on none but penitent believers ; but he bestows the grace of repentance and faith on those who were dead in sin.' But is this grace of re-

penitance and faith a *condition* of election ? If it be said, yes, then unconditional election is renounced. If it be said no, then is unconditional election asserted. The former sentiment is *ours*; and if Mr. W. believe in it, why does he *oppose* us; but if not, why does he insinuate that I have, from ignorance of his doctrine, stated the question wrong? Does he hold to an *unconditional-conditional* election? If he does, he will confer a favour on us, to explain what is the meaning of such election. If he does not, as he opposes our doctrine of *conditional* election, he must hold to *unconditional* election; and I do not apprehend that that phrase is so mysterious, that a person of a moderate understanding cannot comprehend it.

The plain state of the case appears to be this:— So pointed are the scriptures against his doctrine of unconditional election, and so conclusive the rational arguments which have been brought against it, that our antagonist, to evade their force, resorts to this miserable subterfuge, to affect some semblance of consistency. Every body who has attended to this subject, knows that the Calvinists, and Hopkinsians hold to unconditional election and reprobation. What the latter say about the conditions of the covenant of grace is a mere fallacy; For they believe, not only that the decree of election is unconditional, but that a sinner is regenerated, and, of course is infallibly certain of eternal life, without any conditions; repentance, faith, &c. are all subsequent to regeneration, and are as infallibly secured in the eternal decree of election, as is the salvation of the elect, or the damnation of the reprobate. Why then does Mr. W. evince such a solicitude to evade this point? Is he not conscious of his inability to defend himself upon the open field of Hopkinsianism? Or does he wish to impose upon the public a belief that he has re-

nounced unconditional decrees, election and reprobation? Why then so violently oppose us who never believed that doctrine? But, if he have become a convert to the truth, why not throw away the ambiguity of language and frankly declare his conversion? This certainly would be much more honourable than such manifest evasion as he has evinced? *I say Mr. W. holds to unconditional election and reprobation.* Now, if he do not, let him deny it, and the dispute between him and us is ended—He has renounced that part of Calvinism and Hopkinsianism, and set his seal to the truth of our doctrine. But if he does hold to it, then his observations are mere quibbling. He may chose which of these alternatives pleases him best.

Moreover, Mr. W. not only makes *election* entirely independent of any condition, but also *regeneration*. This last he supposes precedes repentance and faith, and is effected without any condition to be performed by man whatever; and he also supposes that all who are regenerated, are saints, in the way to heaven, and cannot possibly fail of everlasting felicity: Accordingly sinners are not only unconditionally chosen to eternal life, but are regenerated, born of the Spirit, and sure of eternal life, before they either repent or believe, that is, before any condition is performed by them. Is not this unconditional election and salvation?

In p. 89, Mr. W. complains that I have perverted his sentiments. In his sermon, p. 63, he said, “It is not assigning a sufficient reason for their reprobation to say they were wicked and would not accept of mercy.” This passage I quoted in my letter; and after referring to Eph. v. 5. observed, that either Paul, Jesus Christ, or Mr. W. was mistaken. On this he asks; “Did the author of the letters understand me to say, that something besides wickedness was the guilty and deserving cause of the

destruction of the wicked?" To this I answer, That I understood him just as he said, namely, "That it was not assigning a sufficient reason for their reprobation to say they were wicked and would not accept of mercy." I know that Mr. W. assigned other reasons; but as those other reasons were not sanctioned by the word of God, were we obliged to assent to them? As the scriptures know nothing of his doctrine of *compelling* some sinners to repentance, and of *compelling* others to sin and impenitence, so we know nothing of those other reasons mentioned by the vindicator; and which can only "have force" with those who embrace his contradictory notions of irresistible influence. He asserted, and I understood him according to the plain, literal meaning of his words, "that wickedness is not a sufficient reason for the reprobation of the wicked;" and I understood that the sacred scriptures assign that as the *only reason* why the wicked are reprobated: To support this idea I quoted several texts, one of which was; 'And for this *cause* God shall send them strong delusions, that they may believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believe not the *truth*, but have pleasure in unrighteousness.' 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11. The wickedness of sinners, therefore, and their refusal to accept of mercy are the only reasons which the scriptures assign for the punishment of reprobates; but Mr. W. says these are not sufficient; therefore he assigns others, drawn from his human doctrine of decrees, to which the scriptures are perfect strangers; and hence I said he is wiser in his own conceited system, than Jesus Christ and his servant Paul—and therefore he accuses me of perverting his sentiments! Judge, candid reader, between us.

It is most desirable to bring this controversy into as narrow a compass as possible; and therefore I omit examining all Mr. W.'s arguments, not

only, however, to avoid prolixity, but because many of them are wide of the point. The scriptures quoted and explained in my letters to him, and his remarks upon them, are open to all who wish to consult them; and those who do, are at liberty to form their judgment on the merits of the question, according to the light of truth. Indeed, the principal part of this chapter has been expended in rectifying his mistakes. How much time and labour might have been saved, (if his doctrine is false.) Besides, if his doctrine of universal decrees has been proved erroneous, as I think it has, as his doctrine of election is formed upon *that*, *this* must also fall to the ground. And as that subject has been largely investigated in the first chapter of this work, it would be superfluous to reply to all his arguments in this place, most of which are totally foreign from the point. See, however, the next chapter.

But, it is matter of no small importance for every one to make a practical application of this subject to his own heart and life. As it is an unquestionable truth, every where shining in the sacred pages, that God's love is impartially manifested to all the human family, in the gift of Jesus Christ, who tasted death for every man, it is highly important for every one to see that he makes his calling and election sure. The goodness of God is most gloriously illustrated in making ample provision for the present and eternal salvation of every individual. How base then, and how totally inexcusable are all those who live and die in their sins! A thousand faithful warnings are given to sinners in the day of their merciful visitation; and they are designed by the benevolent Father of our spirits, to arrest the sinner in his progress of iniquity; to convince him of his sinful ingratitude, and his unnatural rebellion; and finally to bring him to the

foot of the cross, that he may eventually be saved everlastinglly. No imposing decree of eternal and unconditional reprobation is found written on any of the ways or works of God, to frighten the burdened sinner away from the mercy of God. No, the door of mercy is opened to all returning prodigals, who are willing to bow to the immutable terms of salvation.

But, says Mr. W. "While you say *your* doctrine does not present the barrier of unconditional reprobation in the way of the sinner, we say, neither does it present any merciful decree of election to open the path," p. 100. To this, we answer; There is a merciful decree of election which opens the path to *all* men. The bars of the Adamic covenant are broken asunder by the Almighty Redeemer, and all in their infant state are included in this merciful decree of election—"By the righteousness of one, the free gift is come upon all men unto justification of life." Through the atoning merits of Christ, and the merciful agency of the Holy Spirit, all probationary sinners are empowered to repent, believe in Christ and be saved. God by no means leaves them under the absolute control of the carnal mind, or to the native perversity of their depraved hearts; but he kindly interferes in their behalf, urging them by a thousand endearing motives to forsake their sins, return unto him, and live.—Nay; He operates directly upon their hearts by his Spirit, with a view to work in them conviction, repentance and salvation; using all the means for this end, which are consistent with man's responsible agency. He neither entices them to sin, nor forces them to holiness: but he restrains them, checks and dissuades them from sin; draws and persuades them to holiness and happiness. And whatever weakness, wickedness, or aversion to good, they may have, his offered grace is all suffi-

cient to strengthen, overcome, and convert them, whenever they yield to his requisitions.

What more is necessary to "open their path?" Must God, in order to save them, unman them, by converting them into mechanical agents? This, indeed would open their way effectually! by rendering them as incapable of acceptable service, as brutes and stones.

We therefore call upon mankind to return unto God and live. The doctrine we teach fixes the culpability of criminal conduct upon the sinner himself; and exhibits an impartial God, who will one day vindicate the claims of his inflexible justice in the perpetual condemnation of those who wilfully and perseveringly refuse to accept of salvation in the name of Jesus Christ: and it also proclaims an Almighty Saviour, every way suited in his character, offices, and the efficacy of his blood, to the guilty, helpless, and impure state of the sinner. It reveals the Holy Spirit, whose divine operations distil as the gentle dew upon the mown grass, or as the showers of rain upon the parched field, to revive the languishing souls of men, and to raise their lapsed powers to divine favour, peace, joy, and everlasting felicity.

May God help all who read these lines to make a saving experiment of these inestimable truths to their own hearts, and to exhibit their superlative excellence in practical life.

## CHAPTER IV.

*On the possibility of final and total apostacy.*

I place this subject next in order, because Mr. Williston's manner of treating it, so closely connects it with his doctrine of election, that the two subjects seem interwoven. It appears indeed, necessarily to follow, that if God have unconditionally elected a definite number to life everlasting, that such and only such will be regenerated ; and when regenerated cannot so fall as to perish forever.— Why should God regenerate a reprobate ? and how can one of the elect be finally lost ?

To support the doctrine of the *possibility* of total apostacy, I shall attempt 1. By direct scripture testimony to shew that Mr. W's. doctrine of unconditional election is erroneous. 2. That his view of the covenant of redemption, according to his own concessions, is inconsistent with scripture, and the sacred harmony of truth. 3. That his arguments on this subject, are inconclusive. 4. The truth of our doctrine shall then be proved from explicit scripture testimony.

1. If the sacred scriptures unequivocally assert that eternal life is *conditional*, then, as they cannot give a false testimony by contradicting themselves, the doctrine of *unconditional* election to eternal life cannot be true. In regard to God having an eternal purpose respecting every event, in particular, respecting the scheme of redemption, and the decree of election; we have no disposition to controvert ; but this eternal purpose is no *hidden* counsel to counteract his own laws by influencing men to sin ; nor no *secret* design to fix unchangeably and unconditionally, the eternal states of men : but this purpose and decree are explicitly *revealed* in the

holy scriptures : and this revelation declares the unalterable determination of God to save and to condemn sinners *conditionally*.

That this is according to the light of scripture, is abundantly manifest. John iii. 14—20. ‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever BELIEVETH on him, should not perish, but have everlasting life’—He that BELIEVETH not is condemned already, BECAUSE he hath not BELIEVED in the name of the only begotten Son of God,’ &c. Whoever will read the above passages attentively, will perceive the *condition* of eternal life *expressed* not less than *seven* times, and that the condition is considered so essential that the salvation of the one depended upon its performance, and the damnation of the other upon its non-performance. Now admitting that some of the human family were unconditionally elected to eternal life, is it not most likely that Jesus Christ, who came to interpret the will of his heavenly Father, would have varied his expressions ? especially in such an emphatical clause of his discourse, in which he expressly and formally asserts the grand design of God the Father in sending his Son into the world ? If it had been his intention to make an explicit declaration of the will of God, and if that will was exhibited in having elected some to eternal life without any respect to their faith and obedience, would he not have expressed it in the most unequivocal manner ? But no such thing is even suggested in the above words. On the contrary, it is declared, and repeated no less than *seven* times, in the compass of *seven* verses, that our election to eternal life, and reprobation to eternal death, are suspended on *conditions* ; and that too, in connexion with a set and formal discourse with a learned, inquisitive, and ingenuous master in *Israel*, to whom our Lord was explaining the benevolent de-

sign of his mission into the world. If the calvinistic doctrine of election were true, what a fit opportunity this for the Son of God, who came, not only to make an atonement for sin, but also to interpret the will of his Father, to have asserted this doctrine.

Hear the same inimitable teacher again, while conversing with the woman of Samaria, respecting the will of his heavenly Father : ‘ But whosoever DRINKETH of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life,’ John iv. 14. Why did not our Lord, if unconditional election had been true, declare frankly, that all whom the Father had chosen from eternity *should* drink of that water, and *should* inevitably be saved everlastingly ? To quote all the scriptures which make *repentance, faith, loving, walking in the light, and keeping the commandments of God, conditions* of eternal life, would be to transcribe a great part of the bible. And, it is believed, that it would be extremely difficult for the unconditional decretists to bring a single text, which, in so many words asserts, that God hath *unconditionally* elected some, and unconditionally reprobated all the rest. Now as the *conditionality* of the decree of election is plainly expressed in so many places, the contrary doctrine cannot be true. And if that doctrine is not true, as eternal life is suspended on conditions, then, if a believer fail to fulfil the conditions, he has no promise of eternal life ; and hence no *conclusive* argument in favour of the infallible perseverance of all who have been regenerated, can be drawn from the doctrine of election.

“ No text which asserts the doctrine of unconditional election ? Examine the following celebrated passages.” ‘ God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit,

and belief of the truth.' 2 Thes. ii. 13. We will examine them. Here are two things mentioned as the *condition*, or *means* of their salvation; namely, *sanctification of the Spirit*, and *belief of the truth*: these are the *medium* through which these persons were *chosen*. How then could they have been chosen in eternity, seeing their *sanctification* and *belief of the truth*, the expressed means of their election, were both in *time*, after they were born, and *when* they willingly embraced the Lord Jesus Christ.

'Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Christ.'

1 Pet. i. 2.

If the apostle Peter had been initiated into the *modern* doctrine of predestination, would he not have accommodated his language to that doctrine, and have said, Elect according to the *foreordination* of God the Father, through "*electing love*," which he from all eternity determined to bestow on a few chosen ones, to the utter exclusion of all the hated reprobates? Instead, however, of expressing this heterodox sentiment, he declares election of foreknowledge, and asserts that it is through the medium of the *sanctification of the Spirit* and the *sprinkling of the blood of Christ*. Our doctrine could not have been expressed in more unequivocal language.

Let us once more look at that noted passage in Rom. viii. 29, 30. 'For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate,' &c. What a convenient opportunity was this, if the apostle had been an unconditional decretist, to have said, 'For whom he *predestinated* to be conformed to the image of his Son, them he also *foreknew* would be *called*,' &c. This would have placed the apostle's sentiments beyond the reach of controversy, and have classed him with unconditional predestinarians. But, as it now stands, it never can, without manifestly wresting it

from its primitive meaning, be called to aid in support of Calvinistic election ; because the apostle affirms his doctrine of election of God's *foreknowledge*, and not of his *foreordination*. Indeed, were we to understand the apostle as speaking of divine prescience *absolutely* and *universally*, without having any respect to men's faith and obedience, we should make him contradict, not only himself in numerous passages, but also the general tenor of God's word ; and introduce a doctrine which is subversive of the whole gospel scheme ; I mean universalism. 'For whom he did *foreknow*,' &c. Is not God's knowledge infinite ? Were not *all* mankind known to him from eternity ? If so, and if all who were thus foreknown were *unconditionally* predestinated to be *conformed* to the suffering, patient and submissive, *image of Christ* ; and were *called*, *justified*, and *glorified*, then universal salvation follows. But, the Calvinists no more believe this destructive doctrine than we do ; although of the two systems, universalism is less dishonourable to God than Calvinism. That, therefore, could not have been the meaning of the apostle. But the plain, scriptural meaning undoubtedly is, Whom he foreknew as believing, &c. either among Jews or Gentiles, He predestinated to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, as the means of their salvation. So also, at the conclusion of that sublime, and inimitable passage, in which the Apostle unfolds the eternal and immutable determination of God, to send the glad tidings of salvation to the Gentile world, it is said, 'After ye *believed* ye were sealed with that holy spirit of promise,' Eph. i. 13. How any man can attentively read, and understandingly consider the leading design of the inspired writers in the above passages of scripture, without perceiving the *conditionality* of election and salvation, it is difficult to

conceive. See these passages all more largely considered in my letters to Mr. W. p. 31-57.

The argument inferable from the whole is ; If our election and salvation are *conditional*, as the sacred scriptures most evidently declare ; and as a condition binding upon *mutable* beings as mankind are, supposes the *possibility* of not being complied with ; then the doctrine of unconditional election, and its twin doctrine of infallible perseverance are false :—Hence also the possibility of final and total apostacy is established upon the firm *rock of truth*.

2. Let us, in the second place, attend to Mr. W.'s representation of the covenant of redemption. Let it be remembered, however, that it is no part of the present enquiry, whether this covenant were made in eternity between the persons of the God-head ; neither was this question made a subject of much importance in my letter to Mr. W. although he has laboured much to show, that it is possible such a covenant might have been made between persons co-equal, co-eternal, and eternally subsisting in Trinity of Unity, and Unity of Trinity. The possibility of such a concert, and covenant transaction, being, so far as the *present* controversy is concerned, a mere point of speculation, I shall not stop to dispute : Thus much, however, I will venture to affirm, that I never yet have seen any scriptures quoted, either by Mr. W. or any one else, that do by any candid construction, support such a doctrine. I have read the learned Witsius on the covenants with some attention, and deeply considered all Mr. W. has said and many others, and that with a simple desire to know the truth ; and the result has been, a belief that the existence of such a covenant, is a chimera of men's invention. Leaving, however, the consideration of this subject to others, let

us see whether, if there be such a covenant, Mr. W. has accurately defined it.

It should be distinctly understood that he infers the certain and infallible perseverance of all who have been regenerated, from this covenant of redemption; of course he limits the provisions of it to them, and to them only. "The very idea," says he, "of some being chosen, in distinction from others, supposes the others not to be thus chosen." p. 92. I have read his section upon this subject with the deepest attention, and think, that I have not misapprehended his meaning. Indeed if he do not infer the certain perseverance of the regenerated from the supposition that Christ secured their eternal salvation by fulfilling *his* covenant engagements, then his doctrine of redemption can have no kind of bearing upon the present controversy. This covenant, he moreover observes, contains no other conditions than what were fulfilled by the *Divine* persons themselves, (see p. 149 of his book;) of course the provisions of it, or blessings flowing from it, do not depend in any manner upon conditions to be performed by men. And yet, according to him, the covenant of grace is conditional; that is, man must perform conditions before he can have that eternal life which Christ secured for him, by fulfilling for him the only conditions which were required in the covenant of redemption! But if the infallible perseverance of the elect flows from the covenant of redemption, the conditions of which covenant were fulfilled by the divine persons themselves, how can the salvation of the elect depend in any measure on conditions to be performed by them? If any one can intelligibly explain this mystery, and obviate the manifest inconsistencies of this doctrine, they will afford some evidence of its truth.

One principal object of my letter to Mr. W. on this subject, was, to shew, that, according to his own concessions, his ideas of the covenant of re-

demption were erroneous. And, that they are, I shall now attempt more particularly to evince.

He acknowledges, both in his sermons and in his vindication, that Christ died for *all* men without exception. Now, if there were a covenant transaction "between the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, concerning the redemption of sinners," as Mr. W. affirms, (p. 140.) it must have been concerning Christ's *dying* for sinners; for, without his death there could have been no redemption. And that this reputed covenant must have had respect to the *death* of Christ, is evident from those scriptures to which Mr. W. refers his readers. 'Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, and smitten of God'—'And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his *death*'—'Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.' Isaiah liii. 4—10. That this celebrated passage of prophetic scripture, pointed to the *sufferings* and *death* of Jesus Christ, must be evident to all who read it attentively. The inference drawn from this fact is, that, if in the covenant of Redemption Christ engaged to *die* for sinners, and if by his *death* he made atonement for *all mankind*, as the scriptures plainly assert, and Mr. W. admits, then his notion respecting the *provisions* of this covenant being restricted to *only a few*, which few must inevitably persevere to the end, is manifestly erroneous. This is the view which was taken of this subject in my letter; and I cannot see how it is possible for my antagonist to avoid this conclusion. That he could not avoid it, is tacitly acknowledged, by his passing over, in his vindication, all the scriptures and arguments I used to support this conclu-

sion. If he considered those scriptures not appositely applied, and the arguments fallacious, why did he not detect their fallacy in his reply? This would have benefited his cause much more, than merely fixing his attention upon a clause incidentally inserted, from which no argument was drawn by me, and upon which no particular stress was laid, as to deciding the contested question at issue between us.\*

As it is highly probable some may read this work, who cannot have access to my letters to Mr. W. it is thought expedient to present to the reader those scriptures which are there quoted, with some

\* In my letter to Mr. W. upon this subject, I said, 'It is truly surprising that he should cite Psalm cx. 3. to prove that there was a covenant of redemption made between the persons of the godhead, who are essentially one, in eternity.' p. 216. Now I think it will appear manifest to every unprejudiced mind, that no particular stress was laid upon the *essential unity of the Trinity*, against the existence of a covenant of redemption. I made it no ground of argument at all. And yet my antagonist is at great pains to prove the possibility of such a covenant between the Divine Persons. Would he not, then, have employed his time to more purpose in canvassing my scripture proof against *his* notion of a *partial* scheme of redemption, in distinction from the universality of the atonement, which last he acknowledges is scriptural? I cannot find that he has even touched those scriptures; nor fairly met one of the inferences drawn from them.

When Mr. W. says, that the covenant of redemption contains no other conditions than what were performed by the divine persons themselves, if he will extend the benefits of that covenant to all men in their infant state, and restrict its unconditional benefits to them, and to the affording all men a probationary state, by which they are thereby enabled to repent, believe, and be saved, we entirely agree with him. For we always believed that Jesus Christ, by his sufferings and death, unconditionally, that is, without any conditions required of man, set all men free from the *guilt* of Adam's sin, and thereby opened a door of mercy for all men. And so also all the provisions of the gospel, except justification, salvation, and eternal glory, are unconditionally bestowed upon mankind. These are the inestimable privileges to which mankind are elected unconditionally. And all these flow from the plenitude of Divine goodness.

of the observations, which are all left unnoticed by him. ‘In regard to the work of redemption accomplished by Christ, the scriptures uniformly ascribe it to his *death*, to the shedding of his blood—*I Pet. i. 18, 19.* *Ye were not REDEEMED with corruptible things—But with the precious BLOOD of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot.* *Rev. v. 9. For thou hast REDEEMED us to God by thy BLOOD.* *Gal. iv. 4, 5. But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To REDEEM them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.* Those who have *redemption* are said to have it through his *blood*. *Eph. i. 7. In whom we have REDEMPTION through his BLOOD, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.* In all these texts of scripture, which speak expressly on the subject of *redemption*, there is no information respecting a covenant “made between the persons of the God-head” for one part of mankind only; but they relate expressly to the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. By admitting therefore that Christ died for all, you also admit that the scheme of redemption comprehended all; so that your distinction between atonement and redemption is utterly repugnant to scripture.’ p. 226.

The argument is this: If in the covenant of redemption Jesus Christ engaged to redeem sinners by his death; and if he did, by virtue of that engagement, actually die for *all* sinners, as the scriptures amply testify, and Mr. W. freely admits, then his views of this covenant, which restrict its provisions for only a *part* of sinners, are unscriptural and inconsistent with Mr. Williston himself; and therefore his inference, respecting the infallible perseverance of all who were comprehended in this covenant, is inconsequent, and contrary to the express declarations of God’s word, which affirms that

*some for whom Christ died, will finally perish.* If the death of Christ was the meritorious *act* by which his covenant engagements were accomplished; and if by this act, he made complete atonement for all mankind; and if all who were thus atoned for will infallibly be saved; then *all* will be saved: but the holy scriptures most expressly declare that *all* will *not* be saved; and therefore Mr. W.'s view of the covenant of redemption, and his inference from it, are both erroneous.

This will more plainly appear from his concessions in his vindication. In p. 59, he says, "We believe that the interposition of the Redeemer has put all mankind into a *salvable state*"—and p. 154, he observes, "One thing which the Saviour engaged in the covenant of redemption, was to make a propitiation for the sin of the whole world, so as to open a door of mercy for all." Here then are his views of the *engagements* of Christ; he atoned for the sin of the *whole world*, by which means *all* mankind are put into a *salvable state*: and this we believe is a scriptural view of the subject. But, from this view of the covenant engagements of Christ, how can it be justly inferred that all who were redeemed by him, will infallibly be saved, without inferring the salvation of all mankind?—Hence it was said that the inferential proof in favour of the certain perseverance of all who were given to Christ in the covenant of redemption, is fallacious, and therefore cannot stand against the pointed testimony of scripture.

But how can this scriptural view of the atonement of Christ, be reconciled with the doctrine of eternal and unconditional reprobation? Why, says Mr. W. by denying that Christ had an "intention that all should become *actually* interested in" his merits. p. 97. This unfortunate answer was anticipated and answered in p. 223 of my letters.—

Now, if God designed to withhold all the benefits of Christ's death from a definite number of the human family, who were eternally excluded by a decree of preterition, of what use could the atonement have been to them? Moreover, here is a particular number eternally reprobated to eternal burning, who are nevertheless, by the death of Christ, put into a *salvable* state; that is, in a state in which they *may* be saved, notwithstanding the decree of reprobation had made their damnation *certain*, ages before they were born! Christ never *designed* they should be *actually interested* in his merits, and yet they *may* be saved? Did ever such jarring sentiments flow from any other fountain?

If the eternally reprobated are in a *salvable* state, inasmuch as, according to Mr. W. God never *designed* their salvation, then they may be saved *contrary* to God's *design*, and without having an *actual* interest in the atonement of Christ. Is this thy consistency, thou vindicator of reformed doctrines! Here then is a *whole world* in a *salvable* state, and yet a *part* of that whole world *eternally* reprobated by an immutable decree! A *whole* world atoned for, a part of whom never had any saving interest in the atonement! May such absurd assertions, be hid from the sceptical world, lest they be confirmed in their unreasonable prejudices against the consistency of divine revelation.

This unscriptural doctrine declares the Son of God to be a most notorious hypocrite; for it represents him as having made atonement, that is, answering the demands of divine justice, for those who, according to another component part of Hopkinsianism, were eternally reprobated, and who, notwithstanding Jesus Christ died for them, he never designed, nor intended to save; and for whom, therefore, salvation was never possible; unless we absurdly suppose the eternal and unchangeable

purpose of God should be defeated.—It also represents him as holding out insincere offers of salvation to the unhappy reprobates, thereby deluding them into a belief of his intention and willingness to save them, although they were doomed to utter destruction by an irresistible decree. (See the remarks on natural ability and moral inability.)

But let us contrast this doctrine respecting Christ having made atonement for the whole world, with what Mr. W. has said respecting *national* election and *national* reprobation. In p. 87, he acknowledges that his doctrine of election implies “personal reprobation;” and in p.p. 80, 81, he avers that “the national election of the Jews to their peculiar privileges, and the national reprobation of the gentiles, ‘did most intimately relate to the things of eternity, and to the salvation of souls from eternal death.’” Here then is the doctrine of ‘wide reprobating wrath,’ as the pious, learned, and ingenuous Mr. Fletcher has expressed it. I suppose it will not be difficult to understand now, what the Hopkinsians mean by *unconditional* reprobation. The whole gentile world were, for four thousand years, men, women and children, although in a *salvable* state in consequence of being comprehended in the scheme of redemption, unconditionally reprobated to eternal burnings! One would think that to mention such monstrous absurdities were quite sufficient to refute them. *Melchisidec*, *Job*, and all other virtuous heathens, eternally reprobated! for what? Why, for not being born among Jews! *David* may commit adultery and murder Uriah; and *Solomon* may worship the gods of the heathens around about; but as they were included in the visible church, God sees no sin in them! But an *Abimilech*, let him possess ever so much ‘integrity of heart, and innocence of hands;’ and an *Adrian*, whatever may be his royal virtues; a So-

crates, a *Thales*, however free from vice ; must be sent to eternal burnings, because born heathens ; for which they were no more accountable, than they were for not "*creating two moons* ;" and yet, astonishing to relate, according to Mr. W.'s views of the atonement of Christ, all these reprobated myriads, were, notwithstanding their eternal and *unconditional* reprobation, in a *salvable* state, and consequently *conditionally* condemned for not acceding to the terms of salvation, which, though never made for them, nor offered to them, were nevertheless provided for, and sincerely offered to them. Is such inconsistent jargon fit to be recommended as an object of faith ?

How contrary is this doctrine, which sweeps so many nations and individuals with the besom of destruction, to the sentiments of St. Paul, Rom. ii. 14, 15. 'For when the *gentiles*' (Mr. W.'s reprobates) 'which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves, which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another.' This important passage of sacred scripture, cuts up by the roots that narrow contracted scheme which stamps the whole heathen world with the indelible mark of reprobation ; and exhibits an impartial God judging mankind according to the light of the dispensation under which they have been, by an inscrutable providence, placed ; and completely overthrows the inference which our antagonist has drawn from our doctrine of national election and reprobation, namely, that it necessarily involves eternal and individual election and reprobation. No such horrid consequences flow from our doctrine. God, for wise reasons, resolvable into a just and beneficent providence, saw fit to reprobate, except.

ing the Jews, all the nations of the earth, from that special revelation of his will, which was given to the Jews ; but it does not follow from that circumstance, that they were also reprobated to eternal burnings in the world to come. According to the sentiments of the apostle, in the above passage, those gentiles who have not the *written law*, are a *law unto themselves*; and that those which *shew the work of the law written in their hearts*; that is, those who suffer themselves to be influenced by the dictates of their consciences, which are more or less enlightened by that law of the Spirit, which under every dispensation, and among all nations, is more or less made known to men, shall be finally accepted through the mediation of Jesus Christ. It is true, their salvation is of *grace*—a gracious God condescending to save those, who conscientiously improve the talent committed to their trust.

It is undeniably manifest, I think, that one or the other of these doctrines must be false; either the doctrine of unconditional reprobation, or the doctrine of universal atonement, which puts all mankind into a *salvable* state; for they appear totally incompatible with each other. But that Jesus Christ tasted death for *every man*, and that all men are in a *salvable* state, is most unequivocally revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and therefore it must be admitted as an incontestible truth; consequently the doctrine of a partial and restricted scheme of redemption, and of a definite unconditional election and reprobation, must be false; and hence it follows by necessary consequence, that the doctrine of the certain perseverance of a redeemed few who only were comprehended in the scheme of redemption, derives no support from the scriptural doctrine of the atonement.

It seems expedient to rectify some mistakes which Mr. W. has made in respect to what I wrote

on this subject. In p. 149, he says I "confounded the distinction between the covenant of redemption and the covenant of grace." This is a mistake: I said, indeed, that there is no *such* distinction as he has made; that is, that Christ covenanted to redeem only a *part*, while it is manifest that he died for *all*; and that, in the covenant of grace, offers of salvation are actually made *to all*; because, if only a *part* were redeemed, how could *all* have been saved? My object in the letter was to prove that the work of redemption was accomplished by the *death* of Christ; and as Mr. W. admitted the scriptural truth, that the merits of his death were commensurate to the wants of the whole human family, that *therefore* his distinction between *redemption* and the *atonement* was unscriptural. And as he has brought neither scripture nor argument to invalidate my direct scripture proof upon this subject, or the inferences drawn from that proof, I consider this part of the subject remains permanently established on the immovable rock of truth.

That a distinction was admitted between the *atonement*, and the covenant of grace, the reader will perceive by turning to pages 227, 228, 229. 'Perhaps,' said I, 'you will reply, that the atonement is distinct from the covenant of grace.' We grant there is a distinction. For the grand work of atonement was effected without any condition on our part. Christ by his sufferings and death accomplished this work, and thereby opened a way by which sinners might come to God, and obtain life everlasting.' The same distinction is noted in the following passage:—'In regard to the price of redemption, or work of atonement, I grant it did not depend on any conditions to be performed by men, because it was effected by Jesus Christ independently of all men; but that our present and eternal salvation, is suspended on conditions to be

performed by us, is abundantly manifest from numerous passages of scripture.' Now, if the shedding of Christ's blood was the very act, by which the covenant engagements of Christ were fulfilled, and as by this meritorious act *all* were unconditionally redeemed from the proper *penalty* of the *Adamic* law, then, though Mr. W.'s distinction between *redemption* and *atonement*, is not visible, yet ours between the *atonement*, and its application in our *salvation*, is very apparent; there is a manifest difference between the work of redemption and the work of salvation: The former was accomplished by Jesus Christ, by his sufferings and death: the latter is effected, indeed, by Christ, but on condition of repentance, faith, love, and obedience. Now, as our present and eternal salvation is *conditional*, the doctrine of an *unconditional* and infallible perseverance is not inferable from the covenant of grace, any more than from the covenant of redemption; and hence Mr. W.'s doctrine of the *impossibility* of final and total apostacy, receives no support from either of these covenants.

3. What then becomes of his arguments? If his foundation be destroyed by scripture testimony and by his own concessions, then are all his arguments fallacious. He shall be allowed, however, to say all he can in support of his theory. Let us then, attend to his scripture quotations. The following texts he produces to prove that his perceptions of the covenant of redemption, limited in its provisions to the elect only, are scriptural:—'Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance.' Psalm ii. 8. 'The LORD said unto my LORD, Sit thou,' &c. 'The LORD hath sworn and will not repent, Thou art a Priest forever?' Psalm cx. 1. 4. 'I will give thee for a covenant of the people.' Isa. xlix. 8. 'I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work thou gavest me to do.' John xvii. 4. Allowing these texts prove, (which, however,

admits of a serious doubt,) that there was a covenant existing in eternity between the Father and the Son, and which was accomplished by Christ during his incarnation, they by no means prove Mr. W.'s point ; for Christ, who was given for a *covenant for the people*, was given as a sacrifice for the sin of the *whole world*; and when he said by anticipation *I have finished the work*, &c. as in that work he actually died upon the cross, by which he made atonement for *all men*, these texts are very far from establishing the Calvinistic doctrine of a limited, and partial scheme of redemption. The same observations will apply to his lengthy quotation from the lxxxixth Psalm. From his manner of introducing these texts, his readers might infer that we did not believe Jesus Christ was constituted a Priest over the house of God ; but we wish our readers to understand, that this inestimable truth forms a very important and interesting part of our creed. Yes ; we exult in believing that *Jesus Christ is exalted at the right hand of God to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins*. The word of promise is fulfilled, which said, *Also, I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth*. But, while it is believed, that these texts of sacred scripture prove that Jesus Christ was constituted a Priest over the house of God, and declare, in unequivocal language, that he should be rewarded with a numerous seed of spiritual children, they do not afford the least support to the doctrine of our antagonist, which restricts the covenant of redemption to an elect few. Jesus Christ, who was the subject matter of these prophetic declarations, poured out his soul a sacrifice for the *sin of the whole world*, and thereby redeemed them from the penalty of the Adamic law, and placed them all in a salvable state ; and therefore all who were thus redeemed by him, are not sure of eternal blessedness ; and

those who are finally condemned, will be condemned only on account of their own personal transgressions.

One grand objection to this doctrine is, that it totally overthrows the doctrine of salvation by grace. The Calvinistic doctrine, which asserts that Jesus Christ has made perfect satisfaction to the justice of God in behalf of the elect, places their salvation on the principle of *justice* and not upon *grace*: for, if the whole debt which the elect owed to God, was assumed by Jesus Christ, and by him discharged, then the *justice* of God can have no further demand upon *them*. The law of God being completely satisfied by the obedience of Christ unto death, it can have no just demand upon those for whom satisfaction was made by Christ: and if the law has no demand, there can be no condemnation; and if no condemnation, no necessity of repentance, consequently no need of forgiveness; and therefore no room for the manifestation of *grace* in pardon and salvation: Thus does this fatal doctrine destroy at a stroke the whole gospel scheme of salvation by grace. If the penalty of the law be exacted, and answered, whether by proxy or otherwise, it is certain *justice* can have no farther demand upon the delinquent. If I owe a thousand dollars, which my friend pays for me, and it is accepted by my creditor, the bond is cancelled; the law can have no just demand upon me; neither am I under any obligation to ask pardon for my failure. It would be the same, were I guilty of a criminal offence against the law of my country:—If that offence were unconditionally atoned for, neither the judicative, nor the executive authority can have any just demand upon me: I can demand an exemption from punishment on the principle of justice; the law itself justifies me. In like manner, If Jesus Christ have, according to the Hopkinsian princi-

ple, unconditionally atoned for the sins of the whole world, both *original* and *actual*, then there can be no just demand against mankind now; they are all set free, and that too, by the voice of law and justice. Why should a man ask pardon for an offence which is already atoned for, and for which the law has received complete satisfaction? This doctrine then represents the Almighty as demanding satisfaction *twice* for a breach of the law *once*; first, by the death of Christ, which is supposed to have been commensurate to the whole demand of the law transgressed; and then, secondly, of the sinner himself, who must either repent and obtain forgiveness, or otherwise suffer the penalty of that identical law, whose righteous demands have already been completely satisfied by the obedience and death of Christ! Where then is grace? Nay, where is *justice* itself? For if Christ have satisfied the demands of the law, in its utmost extent, how can that same law have any demand upon man? And if there be no *law* to *condemn*, what need of any *grace* to *pardon*? If the penalty of the law be answered, whether by Christ, or by the sinner himself, then the sinner is either justified by law, or otherwise condemned unjustly. But the sacred scriptures uniformly declare that, *By the deeds of the law, no flesh shall be justified in his sight.* That theory, therefore, which supersedes the necessity of justification by *grace*, through faith in Christ, by placing his justification on the principle of *justice*, must be discarded as unscriptural and false. If the law has had all its demands answered by Christ, then it cannot justly demand any thing from man—and if the law have no demand, he cannot be justly condemned—if not justly condemned, there is no need of repentance and forgiveness; for what need of being forgiven, when there is nothing to condemn him? But the scriptures positively declare

that sinners are in a state of condemnation, that repentance, faith, and forgiveness are indispensable to salvation: that theory therefore, which supersedes the necessity of repentance and of forgiveness, must be antisciptural. The same infallible records testify that, *By grace ye are saved through faith.* But the scheme now opposed, supersedes the necessity of *grace*, to pardon the penitent sinner, by placing his justification on the ground of *justice*. Is not then that scheme unscriptural?

If it should be said, that, ‘notwithstanding Jesus Christ satisfied the demands of divine justice, yet the salvation of the sinner is of grace, because it was an act of grace in Christ thus to volunteer his services to rescue man’—It is answerd—This does not help the subject any. For the advocates of that system affirm, that the elect are given to Christ to *reward* him for *his* sufferings. According to this statement, therefore, God the Father paid Jesus Christ a stipulated sum in souls, for an equivalent for his obedience unto death. If this be so, the sufferings and death of Christ no more originated in grace, than pardon does, on the supposition that the demands of the *law* are answered. According to the theory now opposed, the whole system of redemption was a *legal* transaction, in which Christ offered his blood as an equivalent for so many souls, which he thereby literally *bought* from divine justice; and which are made over to him in this *legal contract* to requite him for his sufferings. By this means that lovely image of the divine Being which we have been led so much to admire, namely, his *infinite love*, is entirely effaced, and we are presented with a morose Being, whose inflexible demands were such upon mankind, that he would not relinquish them without first receiving an equivalent: and Jesus Christ, our adored Saviour, is also stript of his gracious and benevolent character, and changed

into a mercenary being who only came into the world to enhance his own interest by paying a price to his Father for the souls of an elect few. While I would bow to the corrections of men of superior discernment, it really appears to me that this scheme totally annihilates the very idea of grace in either the work of redemption or salvation. If those who contend for this graceless theory say, that they do not understand the terms in which they convey their meaning *literally*, then it is granted they convey no meaning at all—They ought therefore to explain themselves, and tell us what they do mean. If they design to interpret those scriptures which speak upon this subject *metaphorically*, then they give up their doctrine, and grant pardon and salvation were not *purchased*—If they understand them *literally* then they completely destroy the doctrine of *salvation by grace*.

The above reasonings upon this subject, may be confirmed by some eminent theological writers.

‘The pardoning of sin is a *gracious act of God*, discharging the offender by the Gospel grant, from the obligation to punishment, upon consideration of the satisfaction made by Christ, accepted by the sinner, and pleaded with God.’

‘I call pardon a *gracious act*; for, if it were not gracious or free, it were no pardon. Let those think of this, who say, we have perfectly obeyed the law in Christ, and are therefore righteous. If the proper debt, either of obedience or sufferings, be paid, either by ourselves or by another; then, there is no place left for pardon; for when the debt is paid we owe nothing except new obedience; and therefore can have nothing forgiven us; for the creditor cannot refuse the proper debt, nor deny any acquittance upon receipt thereof.’ This passage is borrowed from Mr. Baxter by Mr. Wes-

ley, and incorporated into his works, vol. xxii. p. 171.

That Christ did not make a penal satisfaction to divine justice, so as to lay the Almighty under an indispensable *obligation* to absolve any criminal from guilt, was the opinion of some Calvinistic ministers; among whom we may reckon Dr. Andrew Fuller. ‘Redemption by Jesus Christ was accomplished, not by a satisfaction that should preclude the exercise of grace in forgiveness, but in which the displeasure of God against sin being manifested, mercy to the sinner might be exercised without any suspicion of his having relinquished his regards for righteousness.’

After mentioning some who have considered the death of Christ as *purchasing* repentance and faith, as well as all other spiritual blessings, on behalf of the elect; and upon this ground have maintained that God is bound in strict justice, in respect to Jesus Christ, to confer grace and glory on all those for whom he died; he observes, ‘The writer of these pages, acknowledges he could never perceive that any clear and determinate idea was conveyed by the term *purchase* in this connexion, nor does it appear to him to be a doctrine taught in the scriptures. The notion of grace being bestowed, on account of value received, appears to him inconsistent with the freeness of grace itself, and with the perfection of the divine being, to whom nothing can be added or given which can lay him under obligation.’ He finally concludes, ‘*If we say, a way was opened by the death of Christ for the free and consistent exercise of mercy in all the methods which sovereign wisdom saw fit to adopt,* perhaps we shall include every material idea which the scripture gives us of that important event.’ p. 157. See Shin on Salvation, p.p. 171, 182. from whose book these quotations are borrowed.

It is manifest that the views of these great and good men, on the subject of redemption and the displays of grace in bestowing pardon, were, so far as they have expressed them in the above extracts, in perfect conformity to our system. As to Calvinistic writers, though they sometimes were carried along with the current of truth, when they lost sight of their peculiar sentiments, yet, we know, at other times, they advocated doctrines in direct hostility to these *doctrines of grace*.

The following appears to us the scriptural representation of this important subject. The *first Adam*, standing as our federal head and representative, by violating the covenant of works under which he was placed, involved himself and all his posterity in ruin : the Lord Jesus, the *second Adam*, by the wise and benevolent appointment of God, became the *second* head and representative of mankind ; and by his meritorious sufferings and death, so satisfied the demands of the Adamic covenant, which the *first* Adam had violated, as to deliver all mankind from its proper *penalty*, so that none are now eternally condemned on account of Adam's sin. This first covenant knew no lenity or mercy ; and therefore it contained no provision for pardoning offenders. The law given to Adam, being immutable and invincible in its demands, could not, without prostrating the honour of the Law-giver, relinquish its requirements, without manifesting a suitable indignation against its violators, by the requirement of an atonement : This atonement being made by the Lord Jesus, the *second Adam*, by suffering the proper penalty of the first covenant, so far as repected the original transgression, mankind are rescued from that state of condemnation, (though not from its contamination,) in which the *first Adam* had involved them. In this new covenant of redemption and grace, pardon is dispensed to the

guilty on condition of repentance and faith. Under this gracious covenant we can say in truth, ‘If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous : And he is the propitiation for our sins ; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.’ 1 John ii. 1, 2.

We have been conducted to this view of the subject, from the reasonings of the apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, chap. v. 15—19. ‘But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one, many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift ; for the judgment was by one to condemnation : but the free gift is by many offences unto justification. For if by one man’s offence, death reigned by one ; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ : Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation ; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience, many were made sinners ; so, by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous.’

In this important passage of sacred scripture, the apostle most evidently contrasts the two covenants, and the two illustrious personages, *Adam* and *Christ*, who stood as the representatives of each ; and the respective results of their conduct. He teaches us, that in consequence of the *one offence*, (plainly referring to the original transgression) many (*πολλοι*) that is, the multitude, the *all* of the human family, were *made*, or *constituted* sinners, all were in a state of condemnation ; but that in consequence of the *obedience of Christ unto death* the *grace of God, and the gift by grace*, which was by

*Jesus Christ*, hath abounded unto many, ( $\pi\omega\lambda\lambdaouς$ ) the multitude, the *all* of mankind. In this connexion the apostle affirms, that the unconditional benefits of Christ's death, are as extensive in respect to the removal of *guilt*, as was the destructive influence of Adam's sin in contracting guilt : and also exhibits the superlative excellence of the grand covenant of redemption, which was established by Christ, in which the pardon of *many offences* is dispensed to all penitent believing sinners ; and likewise shows that salvation, according to the immutable terms of this covenant, is of *grace*, and not of justice. Indeed, we can have no consistent idea of pardon, only as an act of free grace ; for *justice* respects the payment of *debt*, and not the dispensing of *pardon*. The *original* demand of the law, is, in this scheme of salvation, relinquished from the consideration of Christ's obedience unto death ; and a dispensation of *mercy* is opened, in which pardon, salvation and holiness are bestowed upon those who comply with the terms of this new and everlasting covenant.

How gloriously does the benevolent character and conduct of God blazon when viewed through the medium of this gracious covenant ! Exercising a sovereign and merciful government over the world, though inflexible justice might have demanded the punishment of the guilty violators of his law, yet, in consideration of the satisfaction of Christ to the penalty of the Adamic covenant, He appears in the mild character of a gracious governor, dispensing pardons to all returning prodigals who willingly confess their rebellion, and beg for mercy at the foot of the cross. Let men adore, and saints rejoice ! while they contemplate this admirable scheme to rescue guilty sinners from the thraldom of their sins, and to restore them to the divine image.

The atonement having been thus made by Jesus Christ, the terms of the covenant of redemption and

salvation, are now proposed to sinners, for their acceptance, or refusal ; and their salvation or damnation turns upon their accepting or refusing the terms of this covenant. That this is a just representation of the covenant under which mankind are now placed, will appear further evident by appealing to those scriptures, where God is said to have entered into covenant with man. Thus we read, Gen. xv. 18. ‘ The same day the **LORD** made a covenant with Abram, saying, unto thy seed will I give this land’—which covenant is more explicitly related in chap. xvii. 1, &c. ‘ The **LORD** appeared unto Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God : walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make a covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.’ Is there any reference in this transaction to an antecedent covenant having been made in eternity, to redeem one part of mankind to the exclusion of all the rest, as the foundation of this covenant, which God made with Abraham ? And how plainly are the conditions expressed—*Walk before me, and be thou perfect.—Every male child among you shall be circumcised, and ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and you,* ver. 10, 11. Similar conditions are mentioned in God’s answer to the prayer of Solomon, 1 Kings iii. 5—14. ‘ And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes, and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days.’ And did not the malediction of heaven come upon Solomon for departing from the *statutes and commandments* of God ? How awfully was the indignation of God manifested against Solomon, because he failed to fulfil the *conditions* of this covenant ! And what a striking proof this of the danger and possibility of apostacy.

But the conditions of this covenant are mention-

ed in such numerous places, both in the Old, and New Testaments, that it would be superfluous to quote them ; and it is impossible for any man to read the bible attentively without perceiving them, either expressed or implied, in almost every page. Indeed this point is not denied by Mr. Williston. "Living by faith," says he, "and a continuance in well-doing, are as necessary *conditions* of salvation, as believing, in the first instance, is a necessary condition." p. 155. But he supposes that "Conditions in a covenant do not always imply *uncertainty*." p. 153.

If the conditions of the covenant of grace do not imply any uncertainty, then are the elect, by virtue of the covenant of redemption, put quite beyond the saving influence of any condition whatever, their salvation having been immutably secured long before they were born, and consequently entirely independent of any condition by them performed. Is not this *unconditional* election and reprobation ? What sort of conditions are these, which were as immutably fixed as the throne of God itself? Can any man comprehend how the salvation of the elected sinner is suspended upon such immutable conditions as these ? But we shall soon see that all Mr. W. has said respecting the conditions of the gospel covenant, is a mere fallacy, to which he has resorted to avoid the appearance of direct hostility to the sacred scriptures. In p. 151 he says, "Mr. B. represents me as saying, 'The covenant of grace is *unconditional*'—This is quite a mistake, which I shall shew in its proper place." This "proper place" is the place I have quoted, where he contends that the covenant of grace is *conditional*.—When I said that he represented the covenant of grace as unconditional, I did not mean to be understood that he said so in words ; for I knew that he *said* it was conditional : but I meant that his doc-

trine of redemption made the salvation of the elect *unconditional*; and I am of the same mind yet. In his sermons, p. 109, he says, "The Holy Spirit covenanted, without *any conditions* to be performed by men, to renew and sanctify the hearts of all those whom the Father gave to the Son." And again, "Christ did not engage *conditionally*, to keep believers from falling." And according to the doctrine held forth in his vindication, regeneration is effected antecedent to *any condition* of repentance or faith. Here then, sinners are represented, as being *renewed* and *sanctified*, *regenerated* and *born of the Spirit*, and *kept from falling*; and of course are *secured* in the everlasting covenant, entirely *without*, and altogether *before* any conditions are performed—and yet their salvation is conditional! Yes, reader, notwithstanding all this is done for them, namely, *redeemed*, *renewed*, *sanctified*, *regenerated*, and *born of the Spirit*, *unconditionally*, yet their salvation, or election to eternal life, is dependent on *conditions* to be performed by them! I must be excused for not discerning the harmony and consistency of these two propositions—for they appear as irreconcilable to my understanding as the following—A benevolent friend gives me *unconditionally* a large estate, with an indisputable title, and puts me into *actual possession*, with all the rights and privileges of a freeholder, *without any conditions* whatever; pledging himself *absolutely* and *unconditionally* to defend me against *all intruders* whatever; but then I cannot have my title *only on condition* that I must become his willing vassal, bow the knee, and perform certain *duties* annually. I suppose a critic in law might be allowed to smile a little, without impeaching his piety, at such an unconditional-conditional-gratuitous-sale of lands. And shall we smile, or weep over Mr. W's unconditional-conditional-covenant of

grace? Its manifest absurdity will, I believe, render it unworthy of credit, without any further exposure, with all who value their rational powers.

Now I ask every unprejudiced reader, if Mr. W's doctrine of redemption and salvation, does not place the present and eternal felicity of sinners beyond the influence of any condition by them to be performed? and yet, what is more astonishing still, notwithstanding all this is done unconditionally, so that every elect person is immutably sure of eternal felicity, he says, p. 154. "For we know it is a very possible thing, for man to break covenant with God." Here the whole doctrine for which we contend is conceded, namely, that it is *possible* for a believer to "break covenant with God," become an unbeliever, and totally apostatize; for the controversy is only concerning the *possibility* of such an event. This consideration itself, of the manifest inconsistencies into which the defenders of that system are driven, is quite sufficient to induce a suspicion of its truth: Nay, it is one of the strongest internal evidences of its untruth, that the several parts of it oppose and destroy each other.—The natural inference from this view of his arguments is, that the doctrine of infallible perseverance does not flow from the nature of the covenant of grace, any more than from the covenant of redemption.

4. Let us now see, if the possibility of total apostacy is not susceptible of direct proof from the explicit testimony of scripture. In attending to this point, time and room will not permit me to investigate all Mr. W's explanations of those scriptures which were quoted in my letter to him upon this subject. Our readers must examine and compare for themselves, and decide according to the light of evidence. Leaving those scriptures to speak for themselves, and they speak no equivocal

language, it being past the art of sophistry to harmonize them with the doctrine of an infallible perseverance; and also leaving the consideration of the *mere possibility* of the case, which is the point of controversy between us, I shall now take up the subject as a question of *fact*; and attempt to prove, from scripture testimony, that some have totally apostatized from the favour of God.

1. The first instance, as being the most prominent I shall produce, is Judas. Let not those readers, who have been accustomed to believe he was always a devil, be deterred from an impartial examination of his character, and of his end. The prophetic scriptures thus describe this unhappy man:—‘Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me,’ Psal. xli. 9. It is universally allowed, I believe, that this text is a prophetic description of Judas Iscarriot; and, to put this matter beyond doubt, the evangelist John, chap. xiii. 18. has applied it to him, ‘He that eateth bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me.’ Here Christ calls Judas his *own familiar friend, in whom he trusted*. And can we seriously believe that Christ would have taken a *hypocrite*, a *devil*, into familiar *friendship* with him, associated him with his family, and have entrusted him with the sacred office of the ministry? Such a supposition would impeach the adorable Saviour with either ignorance or deceit. If he knew Judas to have been either a devil, or an hypocrite, then he must have deceived the people by sending such a vile man under the sacred character of an apostle, a messenger of heaven to proclaim salvation, to cast out devils, &c. If Judas were a devil, then Christ not only called a devil his *familiar friend*, but also confirmed the accusations of his enemies, who accused him with *casting out devils by Beelzebub*.

*prince of devils.* If Judas were an hypocrite, Christ either sanctified hypocrisy, by enabling it among the honourable means of extending the influence of his kingdom, or otherwise was himself deceived in the character and motives of Judas : But neither of these defects can be attributed to Christ without scandalizing his immaculate character.

Judas was associated with the twelve apostles when Jesus made the following promise to them— ‘Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the REGENERATION, when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’ Math. xix. 28. In these words the Lord Jesus declares Judas to have been *regenerated*, (of course, according to the Hopkinsians themselves, he must have been an elect saint,) and made promise to him (no doubt on condition of perseverance) that he should sit on one of the *twelve thrones*, &c. That he was not *always a devil* is manifest from the words of St. John, chap. xiii. 27. ‘And after the sop, Satan entered into him.’ If Satan entered into Judas *after* the sop, he could not have been in him *before*.

Moreover, the apostle Peter declares, that ‘Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place,’ Acts i. 25. Pray, what did he fall from? Why, from that ministry and apostleship which he had obtained, (ver. 17.) and from that *regeneration*, which Jesus Christ declared he was blessed with; and he thereby forfeited his title to one of the twelve thrones, which had been conditionally promised him by Christ himself. If he were always an *avaricious, hypocritical, or devilish person*, then, as he *fell by transgression*, and as people who *fall in a moral sense*, generally fall into the opposite from what they were, he must have fallen into a *benevolent, sincere, and holy person!* So that after

his *fall by transgression* he must have become a tolerable good person. He might have become, at least, one of Mr. W's "sophomores, i. e. wise fools!" But to complete the sad catastrophe of his career in apostacy, and to finish the melancholy climax of his unhappy life, 'He departed and went and hanged himself.' Mat. xxvii. 5. Here then is the plain matter of fact, amply proved from the indubitable testimony of God's word, of the *final* and *total* apostacy, not only of a professed disciple of Christ, but one who had been pronounced by his unerring Master, *regenerated*, was ordained a minister by Christ himself, sent to preach his everlasting gospel, to cast out devils, and to heal the sick—one too, whom the Lord Jesus called his *own familiar friend in whom he trusted*, with whom he *walked to the house of God and took sweet counsel*; and in whose *honesty* and *integrity* Jesus had such confidence that he was entrusted with the fund for the poor—he carried *the bag*. To say that Christ conferred such honours upon one who was always, an *hypocrite*, a *usurer*, and a *devil*, is to stigmatize him in a more glaring manner, than it would any body of ministers now, to accuse them with employing a haughty, avaricious, unconverted man, to preach the gospel; because, if Christ did so, he must have done it knowingly, and of choice; whereas the best body of men are liable to imposition. Can any man seriously believe that Christ sent a hypocrite to preach sincerity, a covetous impenitent man to preach repentance and benevolence, and a devil to cast out devils! What a sanction would such an example have given, to all future generations to approve of ungodly ministers.

2. The next example I shall adduce is Saul, king of Israel. After Samuel had anointed him, and given him directions concerning his future conduct, he continued his solemn address to him thus—

‘And the Spirit of the **LORD** will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophecy with them, and shalt be turned into another man. And let it be when these signs shall come upon thee, that thou do as occasion shall serve thee ; for God is with thee’—‘And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart ; and all these signs came to pass that day.’ 1 Sam. x. 6, 7, 9. According to this divine testimony respecting king Saul, he was, *by the Spirit of the Lord, turned into another man* : God was *with him*, and gave him *another HEART*. I know not how words can more strongly express a real *radical* change of *heart* and of *character*. If all this can be done for a man, without *regenerating* his heart, and changing his character, then may a man have *another heart*, be turned into *another man*, by having the *Spirit of the Lord come upon him*, and yet possess the *same heart*, be the *same man*, and *remain* destitute of the *Spirit of God* ; which would be no less a contradiction, than to affirm that an *unconditional covenant* contains many *conditions*.

Let us now attend to the account of Saul’s apostacy. ‘And when Saul enquired of the **Lord**, the **Lord** answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.’ And in answer to Samuel’s reproving enquiries, Saul said, ‘For the Philistines make war upon me, and **God is departed from me**, &c. to which Samuel replies, ‘Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the **Lord is departed from thee**, and is become thine enemy?’—‘Because thou disobeyedst the voice of the **LORD**, &c. 1 Sam. xxvii. 6, 15, 16, 18. From this narration of facts, we learn that Saul had *first departed from God*, by *disobeying* his voice ; and that God as a *judicial punishment* to Saul, had *departed* from him, leaving him, first to be infatuated, and second-

ly, delivering him into the hands of his enemies, the *Philistines*, to be destroyed—And finally, to complete the picture of his ingratitude, disobedience, and awful apostacy, Saul, forsaken of God, pursued by his politcal enemies, and no longer aided by his friends, became his own executioner—‘Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it’—‘So Saul died’—‘And no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.’ By this example then, the fact of final and total apostacy is proved.

3. The third example in proof of the fact is that of king Solomon.—As none will dispute but that he had grace, was highly favoured and approved of God, at the time, and for some time after his elevation to the throne of Israel, it would be needless to spend time in its proof. At an advanced period of his life we thus read concerning him :—‘For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did **EVIL** in the sight of the **LORD**’—‘And the **LORD** was angry with Solomon, because his **HEART** was *turned from* the **LORD** God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, and commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods : but he kept not that which the **LORD** commanded.’ 1 Kings xi. 5, 9. 10. And respecting the last public act of his life, we read, ‘Solomon therefore sought to kill Jereboam.’ ver. 40. But Jereboam was only an instrument of God’s righteous vengeance, to rend asunder the kingdom of Israel on account of Solomon’s wickedness. How much soever we may be inclined, from the consideration of Solomon’s former wisdom and goodness to commiserate his unhappy degradation, yet it will be extremely difficult to reconcile his shameful defection from the law of his God, with a state of grace, and favour with God ; for his wickedness was of such notoriety, that the pen of inspiration has re-

corded it, to the perpetual disgrace of that once famous monarch. If then we leave Solomon where the Spirit of inspiration has left him, and we have no account of his repentance, we leave him an undeniable example of a deep revolt from the most elevated station ; and a station rendered more resplendent, by the wisdom and goodness, with which the royal personage was once adorned who filled it : consequently we have, in this instance another evidence of final and total apostacy. If any one can prove that Solomon afterwards repented, he will then have invalidated this evidence ; but, it is believed, that no one is equal to this labour.

4. A *fourth* evidence of the fact now contended for, is that of the Israelites in the wilderness. Of these it is said, ‘ They did all eat of the same spiritual meat ; and did all drink of the same spiritual drink ; for they drank of that spiritual Rock which followed them ; and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased ; for they were overthrown in the wilderness.’ 1 Cor. x. 3, 4, 5. Can men *eat* that *spiritual* meat, and *drink* that *spiritual* drink which Christ gives, and yet not be regenerated ? ‘ Now these things were our examples, that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.’ ver. 6. The apostle certainly assumes the fact of their actual apostacy as a data, from which he derives his argument to dissuade the Corinthian saints from partaking of those evils which would separate them from the favour of God—otherwise his reasoning is divested of all its force.

Those *three and twenty thousand*, whose bones were strewed in the wilderness, are a standing monument of God’s impartial hatred to sin, and a lofty beacon for the warning of all future generations of Christians, that they may not imitate those apostate Israelites, in their *idolatry*, their *levity*, and

their *murmurings* against God ; and also participate with them in their exemplary punishment. How else can these facts be *our examples*? It is to the same melancholy *fact* that the apostle alludes in Heb. iv. 11. from whence he brings his exhortation ;—‘ Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the *same example of unbelief*.’ In both epistles, the apostle was addressing himself to saints, or regenerated persons ; and to guard them from apostatizing, not merely from a “ profession of godliness,” but from the genuine faith of the gospel, the indefatigable apostle adduces this fact of the apostacy of the Israelites. Can we desire stronger testimony in favour of the possibility of *total* apostacy. Some did, (this is the apostle’s argument,) apostatize, and therefore others may ; ‘ Let us then fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.’ chap. iv. 1.

5. The *fifth*, and last example I shall adduce, is that recorded 1 Tim. i. 19, 20. respecting Hymeneus and Alexander. The apostle exhorted his son Timothy to ‘ hold faith and a good conscience ; which some having put away concerning faith, have made shipwreck : of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander, whom I have delivered unto satan.’ It should be remarked that this *faith* and *good conscience* which were *shipwrecked*, totally lost, by Hymeneus and Alexander, were the same which the apostle commanded Timothy to *hold fast*. To say, therefore, that this *faith* and *good conscience* signified only a nominal “ profession of godliness,” is to say that Timothy was exhorted to cleave to a mere external profession of religion, which would ultimately send his soul to hell ! Here then is a plain matter of *fact* —*total* and *final* apostacy ; for a ship wrecked, is completely and irrecoverably lost. What more undeniable evidence of the dangerous possibility of

entire apostacy from the genuine christian faith, could be adduced, it is difficult to conceive.

I shall conclude by remarking, 1. That if the inspired penman had considered the salvation of the elect immutably secured by virtue of the covenant of redemption, is it at all likely they would have adduced so many examples of fatal apostacy? Why did they not declare frankly that all true believers were beyond the reach of danger, instead of giving such solemn cautions as these—*Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall—Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.* Allowing the impossibility of total apostacy, such serious warnings seem like giving a false alarm, by apprising mankind of only an imaginary danger.

2. "Both sides," says Mr. W. "of this question cannot be true, therefore the bible can say nothing only on one side of it." p. 139. In this sentiment I heartily concur. And that the bible says much, *very much* in favour of the dangerous possibility of falling from grace, cannot, I think, be denied. Nay, it speaks in the most strong and direct language in favour of this point; therefore it can say nothing against it; and hence the other side of the question cannot be true.

This work swells so much beyond my expectation when I commenced writing, that I cannot, without too much expense to the reader re-examine those texts I formerly quoted, nor answer all Mr. W.'s observations. To supply, however, this defect in some measure, the reader is requested to consult with solemn prayer to God, and with careful attention to their respective contexts, the following texts of sacred scripture, and then determine for himself on which side of this question the bible is.—Ezek. xviii. 24. John xv. 1, 2, 3, 4. Rom. xi. 17. 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21. Heb. vi. 3, 4, 5, 6. x. 26—

39. Consult also the following—Matt. v. 13. xii. 45. xxiv. 10.—45. Luke xxi. 34. John viii. 31; 32. 1 Cor. ix. 27. 2 Cor. vi. 1. Gal. v. 4. Heb. iii. 4. 2 Pet. iii. 17. Rev. 3. 11. Matt. xviii. 35. If any man can read the above texts, and especially the first catalogue, with a simple desire to know the truth, and not perceive that the bible speaks directly and expressly in favour of the possibility of falling *finally* and *totally* from grace, he may then close his bible, and finally and totally despair of having any satisfactory evidence from it, of any one truth whatever. May God deliver the writer and reader, from trusting to the broken reed of an infallible and certain perseverance, founded upon a covenant, not revealed in the word of God, but expressly contradicted by that word.

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## CHAPTER V.

### *On the doctrine of Evangelical Perfection.*

IT is with some reluctance that I enter upon this subject, not because I have doubts of the truth of our views of it, nor because I perceive any difficulty in meeting the arguments of my opponent; but because I am under the necessity of detecting again his misstatements of our doctrine upon this subject. I have already been reduced to the disagreeable necessity of calling the reader's attention to these defects in the conduct of Mr. W. in several instances; but in none are they more apparent than in his fourth section, on the doctrine of perfection. The title itself, is calculated to make an erroneous impression. “*A vindication of the doctrine of imperfection.*” Does not this contain an indirect insinuation that we defend the doctrine of absolute perfection? A doctrine this, which we no more be-

lieve than we do in universal decrees, or a ‘death purgatory.’ But I perceive his dilemma. It would have been too bare-faced, to have proclaimed himself the advocate, and vindicator of *sinful* imperfection; because this would, among all considerate men, have classed him with *sinful* advocates. His arguments, however, will speak for themselves.

In my letter to him, on this subject, I informed him that he had misrepresented our doctrine upon this point, where he had said in his sermon, that we held, “that saints in this life, are as sinless as they will be in heaven”—and also that the “argument against the power of death to sanctify,” which he said was to be found in our Discipline, was *not* to be found there. See Letter iv. p. 153—155.

To prove that we did not hold to such a sinless perfection in this life, several passages were introduced from our Discipline, which I believe, were sufficiently apposite to support my point. Notwithstanding all this, Mr. W. reiterates his former unsupported assertion, by saying, “I still consider them as holding to a sinless perfection in this life,” i. e. as sinless as they will be in heaven, p. 115. And in the beginning of his section he takes up no less than *four* pages to prove that we *do* hold that saints are as perfect in this life, as they will be in heaven. Here then is a question of *fact* between us: He *affirms*; and we *deny*: We cannot both be right. And I think a man when stating his own sentiments, unless previously convicted of dishonesty, or unless repelled by the searcher of hearts, may be allowed some credit for what he affirms of them,—especially when he supports, as I have done, his affirmation by direct appeals to approved publications. This I have done, to which the reader is referred. And there the *question of fact* at issue shall rest. To multiply proof, would

be a needless waste of time, unless the demand were more imperious than the simple affirmation of a man, who has already, in a number of instances evinced a disposition to evade the force of another's arguments. This is the softest term which I know to represent the conduct of Mr. W. upon this occasion. The reader, I hope, will pardon the expression. To tell a man bluntly that he utters falsehood, would seem inconsistent with that spirit of gentleness, which ought ever to characterize a Christian polemic, unless imperious necessity call for such reproof.

In respect to the "argument against the power of death to sanctify," which I advertised him was not in our Discipline, he observes, p. 104. "I have just been looking over all which it contains on the subject of Christian perfection, and am led to think, that it must have been some other book in which I found the argument." This is quite ingenuous! Almost an acknowledgment, that he never found the argument alluded to any where, much less in the Discipline. What next? Why, he "must have found it in some other book." What other book does he mean? Some other book of Discipline? Nay, but we have no other in which that article is contained. Or does he mean some other of our approved books? I believe we have no other which professedly treats that subject, except Mr. Fletcher's sixth volume of Checks; and it seems our accuser, had that before him when he wrote; but he does not pretend to have found it there. Does he mean "some other book" published by some of our enemies who had as little regard to their own reputation as he? Why did he not atone for his mistake by a frank acknowledgment of his error, instead of resorting to this miserable excuse?

Although his *manner* of stating our sentiments

upon this subject, precludes the necessity and the propriety of refuting his erroneous statements by additional testimony, yet it seems expedient, for a clear understanding of the doctrine under consideration, to mention the *reasons why* our doctrine does not make saints as perfect in this life as they will be in heaven.

In *heaven* it is undeniably manifest that the immaterial spirit will be no longer retarded in its operations by this sluggish body, nor impeded in its pure service of love, praise and adoration, by any of those infirmities which are inseparable from mortality. At the resurrection of the *just and unjust*, the bodies of the saints being raised to honour, clothed with immortality, and placed beyond the reach of corruption; being also, reunited to the sanctified soul, they will be fully qualified to fulfil, in the utmost extent, all the requirements of that law given to Adam. But we suppose, that, in consequence of our apostacy, the fatal effects of which are more or less felt by the best of men while they live, no man, in the present life, perfectly fulfils the precepts of that law; for, if he did, he would no longer need the atoning merits of Christ; and these effects, which the scriptures teach us to call the infirmities of our natures, are, if viewed through that law, sins. We do not mean by these infirmities, irregular desires, unholy passions, such as anger, pride, &c. but those deviations from that perfect rule given to Adam, which spring from unavoidable ignorance, error of judgment, incoherency of thought, impropriety of behaviour towards our superiors, inferiors, or equals; which ignorance being done away in heaven, the judgment accurate in all things, the thoughts flowing regular, and all our behaviour according to the most perfect standard of propriety, we shall no longer transgress any law

whatever. ‘Then shall we know, even as we are known.’ No longer beholding God through the imperfect medium of our present disordered senses, nor, as now, ‘through a glass darkly,’ our views of his ineffable majesty will be inconceivably perspicuous, our knowledge perfect, and our love, obedience, praise and thanksgiving, commensurate to the fullest demands of the Adamic law. Hence, at the day of Judgment, Christ will ‘give up his’ mediatorial ‘kingdom to the Father, and God shall be all in all.’ Coming up to the perfect demands of the covenant of works, the saints in heaven, will no longer need the intercession of Christ, nor the merits of his death to atone for the ‘sins of their holy things.’ All those imperfections of their natures which are the necessary consequences of the first apostacy, and which are inseparable from their present mode of existence, will then have been done away; but which now while in the flesh, need the atoning merits of Christ. Now, we say, that if it be proper to call these deviations from this covenant of works, sins, then it is proper to call all men, the best Christians not excepted, sinners while they live. But the scriptures certainly speak of a deliverance from all sin; and therefore the scriptures cannot call such deviations sins.

Adam having been created holy, his knowledge and judgment perfect, he was fully adequate to all the demands of that covenant of works under which he was placed; but such are the sad effects of his original departure from the terms of that covenant, that none of his unfortunate offspring, in this life, will be raised to that state of sinless purity and perfection, which he possessed, when he came perfect from the hands of his Maker.

If we go upon the ground of moral obligation,

strictly and abstractly considered, we grant that all men are under obligation, by virtue of the relation in which they *representatively* stood to God, to obey the precepts of that law ; and therefore, they are, in the eye of that law, not only sinners, but if judged by its requirements, must be justly condemned. And the only reason why we are not condemned is, because Jesus Christ hath redeemed, (or bought us off) from the curse of that law, having been made, so far as the proper penalty of that law extended, a curse for us : But if we are redeemed from the curse of that law, then we are not under it now, as the rule of our conduct, nor as the terms of our acceptance in the sight of God. In heaven, however, this law is fully obeyed in its utmost extent ; otherwise Christ must occupy the mediatorial throne forever. Now I think that the impartial reader will at once perceive that we do not believe that saints in this life are as perfect, or as sinless as they will be in heaven. We neither hold it in direct assertion, nor by just inference.

The sacred scriptures are very express in proclaiming it to be the unspeakable privilege of God's people to be delivered from all sin ; and yet they more than intimate our inability to comply with the requirements of the Adamic covenant ; therefore they cannot consider those deviations from that covenant which originate from unavoidable ignorance, and mistakes in judgment, sin ; not because they are not a departure from the *original* ground of moral obligation ; but because Christ hath unconditionally atoned for those sins by his *obedience unto death, even the death of the cross.* Indeed, there is no point of christian doctrine more explicitly proved in the sacred scriptures, than this doctrine of the total destruction of sin, properly so called, from the human heart. And this proof was

adduced in my letter, to Mr. Williston. What has he done to invalidate the ample and direct testimony which was presented in that letter? Why, he has re-examined the texts which he had quoted in his sermon to support his doctrine of sinful imperfection, and which were so explained in my letter as to make them harmonize with the purity all along inculcated in the sacred scriptures; but he has not even attempted to reply to my direct scripture proof; and all my arguments from p. 197 to 212, he has passed over in profound silence—and this he calls an answer to my objections to his doctrine! This is what he has done—he has misstated our doctrine, by saying that we hold that the “saints are as sinless in this life as they will be in heaven;” and then exhausted his skill in flaying this phantom of his own imagination, and then—and what then? Why he doubtless enjoys his imaginary triumph in company with his friends—for his re-examination amounts to about this—“I have considered Mr. Bangs’ explanations and arguments, but think my own best, and therefore I beg leave to recommend them to the public.” See p. 113 of his book.

But if his scheme of interpretation be just, the infidel need not allow the bible so honourable a title, as a ‘cunningly devised fable;’ for any set of rogues who should presume to palm a spurious production upon the public, would at least affect the semblance of harmony in its several parts: but if Mr. W.’s plea for “sinful imperfection” be founded in truth, the bible is full of irreconcileable contradictions. To prove this assertion, let us contrast those texts which he has quoted to prove the necessary continuance of sin in this life, with those which declare it to be the desirable privilege of God’s people to be delivered from sin in this life.

*1. All Christians must live in sin while they live.*

**PROOF.**

'For there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and SINNETH NOT.' Eccl. vii. 20.

'If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that SINNETH NOT.)' 1 Kings viii. 46.

'But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into CAPTIVITY to the LAW OF SIN, which is in my members.' Rom. vii. 2, 3.

'Who can say, I have made my heart CLEAN, I am PURE from my SIN?' Prov. xx. 9.

'But how shall a man be JUST with God?'

'If we say we have no SIN, we DECEIVE ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' 1 John i. 8.

'For in many things

*2. It is the privilege of Christians to be delivered from sin in this life.*

**PROOF.**

'He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil SINNETH from the beginning.' 1 John iii. 8.

'How shall we that are dead to SIN, LIVE any longer therein?' Rom. vi. 2.

'For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me FREE from the LAW OF SIN and death—God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, hath for SIN, condemned SIN in the flesh.' Rom. viii. 2, 3.

'Seeing ye have PURIFIED your souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a PURE HEART fervently.' 1 Pet. i. 22.

'The just shall live by faith.'

'If we say we have fellowship with him and walk in DARKNESS, we LIE, and do not the truth.' 1 John i. 6.

'Whosoever is born of

we offend all.' James ii. 2.

God, doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.' 1 John iii. 9.

Now from this *first* class of texts Mr. W. supposes that all Christians must live in sin every moment: and if his interpretation were orthodox, what becomes of the *second* class, to which numerous others might be added? That they cannot refer us, by anticipation, to a future state, must be fully evident to all who read them with attention. Have they then no meaning? That Mr. W. could give them no consistent explanation in conformity to his doctrine, is manifest from his passing over in silence, all these, and many more which were quoted in my letter, and totally evading the irresistible conclusion which was drawn from them, with the exception of John iii. 9. and chap. i. 7. Tit. ii. 14. 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin;' and in his comment upon John iii. 9. he has, as he did before in his sermon, conceded the point to us: "The apostle had," says he, p. 113, "in the sixth verse spoken of the inconsistency of pretending to have fellowship with the Holy One, and *living in sin*, which is the thing meant by *walking in darkness*. Living in sin, in the language of the bible, is living a wicked life, instead of a godly life." See how the current of truth will carry a man along against the tide of error. "Living in sin, in the language of the bible, is living a wicked life!" But Mr. Williston says that all men, the most holy not excepted, live in sin every moment of their lives; therefore, if living in sin is living a *wicked life*, and if those who live a *wicked life* cannot have fellowship with God, as Mr. W. admits; then, according to his doctrine, which asserts that all men *live in sin or live wicked lives*, there are none

who have fellowship with God : but, as it is admitted on all hands that Christians *do have fellowship with God*, it follows that they do not live in sin, according to the evangelical sense of that word. Mr. W. therefore, must either fly directly in the face of scripture facts, by denying that Christians have fellowship with God, or give up his doctrine of *sinful imperfection* ; or otherwise recant his comment upon 1 John iii. 9. He may choose which of these alternatives pleases him best.

But allowing his principle, which asserts that all men must live in sin, how shall we harmonize these seemingly opposite scripture testimonies ? I see no possible way to do it. On that ground then, one or the other class must be false. But if the holy scriptures give a false testimony in one instance, they may in every other instance : and hence this part of Hopkinsianism destroys the sacred harmony, and of course, the divine authority of the inspired volume, by setting its several parts at perpetual variance. Is there not, however, a way to avoid these apparent contrarieties ? It is presumed there is. It is well known to all attentive readers of the bible, that two classes of people are therein characterized,—the *righteous* and the *wicked* : and that the wicked are, according to the concurrent testimony of scripture, characterized by living in *sin*, walking in *darkness*, as being in a state of *condemnation*, and as being *alienated in their minds by wicked works* ; and that the *righteous* are said to have *passed from death unto life*, being *justified*, *walking in the light*, and as being *reconciled to God*, by being *renewed in the spirit of their minds*—and those who have arrived to a *mature age* in the christian life are said to be *free from sin*, to be *holy in all manner of conversation*. Now if we apply the first class of scriptures to those who are in a state of nature, *unpurified by the blood of Christ* ; and the second class to

those, who have not only been *justified*, but also *sanctified* by the blood of the everlasting covenant; we shall behold a consistent, and harmonious opposition and union, in the divine testimony.—Otherwise there exists a discordant opposition which renders them unworthy of credit. Let us then see if we cannot devise a plan of reconciliation. Take the following propositions and examine their proof.

1. *All men, previous to justification are by nature and practice, sinners.*

**PROOF.**

‘All have SINNED, and come short of the glory of God.’ Rom. iii. 2, 3.

‘There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and SINNETH not.’

‘If we say that we have no SIN, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.’

2. *It is the privilege of Christians, according to the evangelical covenant, to be free from sin.*

**PROOF.**

‘Being made FREE from SIN, and become servants to God, &c.

‘The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me FREE from SIN! ‘Shall we continue in SIN that grace may abound? God forbid.

‘He that committeth SIN, is of the devil—‘He that is born of God doth not commit SIN.’

When those sinners characterized by the first class of texts, are *renewed in the spirit of their minds*, and are, on condition of *walking in the light*, sanctified by the blood of the everlasting covenant, they pass from nature to grace, and from the power and dominion of sin, to a state of holiness and purity; and then they are characterized by the second class of scriptures, having had their *hearts purified* by faith in Christ. This method of interpreting and applying the sacred testimony of the spirit presents us with a harmonious view of those venerable

records of our salvation.—Or, we may adopt the following plan of reconciliation—

1. *If Christians be viewed in relation to the Adamic covenant, which was a covenant of works, they must be denominated "sinfully imperfect."*

**PROOF.**

‘By the deeds of the law, no flesh shall be justified in his sight.’

‘There is no man that SINNETH not.’

‘Lord I am vile; what shall I answer.’

‘In many things we OFFEND all.’

2. *But if Christians are viewed in relation to the dispensation of grace, under which the grand covenant of redemption has placed them, they have a sinless perfection.*

**PROOF.**

‘Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not SIN’—‘Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy SIN is purged’—‘If the Son make you FREE, ye shall be FREE indeed.’

‘How shall we that are dead to SIN, LIVE any longer therein?’

‘If we confess our SINS—he cleanseth us from ALL unrighteousness.’

‘If any man saith, that he knoweth God, and keepeth not his commandments, he is a LIAR.’

Here both of these propositions are supported by ample, and apposite testimony. Again,

1. *There are none but what are liable to sin.*

**PROOF.**

‘If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.’

‘Repent, therefore, and

2. *There are no Christians under the necessity of sinning.*

**PROOF.**

‘The Lord is my keeper’—He that keepeth Israel shall never slumber nor sleep’—

‘No good thing will he

do your first works, or I withhold from them who will fight against you, walk uprightly—‘ Sin with the sword of my mouth.’

‘ David, Solomon, and Peter, after their conversion, sinned most grievously, which proves that the saints are *liable* to sin.’

‘ Enoch, Abraham, Daniel, Job, Isaiah, Paul, John, &c. &c. all maintained such a holy character, that we have no account of their having sinned after their conversion; which proves that God is able and willing to keep his people from sinning, if they are obedient to his will; and also that none are under the *necessity* of sinning.’

If the reader will pay particular attention to the doctrinal propositions which head each class of scripture proof, he will perceive them amply supported by direct scripture testimony; and likewise, that this method of applying the scriptures, completely obviates the apparent contrariety, which is so manifestly exhibited on Mr. W’s mode of interpretation. Thus we have a delightful view of the sacred harmony of divine testimony, proving the various points of gospel doctrine.

In my letter to Mr. W. I attempted to vindicate the character of the apostle Paul, from the charge of carnality, which the opposers of Christian perfection endeavour to fix upon him, by quotations from the seventh of Romans. I wish the reader to consult that letter for himself, and then judge how far Mr. W. has removed the arguments which are there used to harmonize what is said in that chap-

ter, with what is said in the eighth chapter. He has, however, attempted to defend his application of that chapter to St. Paul, in his justified state, and to all experimental Christians. Let us examine some of his observations on that subject. In p. 107, he says, "Mr. B. knows it is our belief, that the *dominion* of sin is put down in the hearts of believers, and that all their sins are forgiven them for Christ's sake." I am extremely gratified to find our vindicator of the doctrine of sinfulness, has made this frank confession of his faith in the efficacy of the atoning merits of Christ. "The dominion of sin is put down," is it? By *dominion* we are to understand, something that *tyranizes*, or has an *authoritative influence* over another, so that the subject of this influence is under some kind of necessity, either with, or without his consent, to yield obedience. If therefore the *dominion* of sin is put down in the hearts of believers, they are no longer under its influence or control. This then is Mr. W.'s belief in respect to the Christian's privilege. Now let us contrast this description of the Christian's privilege, with what St. Paul says of himself in the seventh of Romans; and which the vindicator supposes is applicable to all saints.

"The dominion of sin is put down in the hearts of believers," Mr. W. p. 107. Here sin is brought *under*, and the Christian is represented as having dominion over sin.

'For what I do, I allow not—but what I hate, that do I.' 'Now then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.' Rom. vii. 15, 17.

Here sin is represented as having the *dominion*, and as *influencing* to that

which the person would not. Is then *sin put down*, where it reigns with such control? Therefore, according to Mr. W's own description of the Christian character, the person characterized in that chapter,

was not an apostolic christian. Take another instance.

"The dominion of sin is put down in the hearts of believers."

*Mr. Williston.*

'But I see another law in my members, waring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin in my members,' ver. 23.

Here then, the person described is completely *under the dominion of sin*, which was *in his members*, having such control over him, as to make him a *captive to the law of sin*: and yet, according to Mr. W. a believer has the *dominion of sin* put down, and he is under the dominion of grace. Now, if Mr. W. has honestly declared his faith in respect to the character of the believer; and if that faith is correct, it is manifest that St. Paul was not describing the character, nor asserting the privilege of an experimental believer, in the seventh of Romans. And to shew the absolute absurdity of applying what the apostle there says, to a Christian brought into the liberties of the gospel, permit me to present the reader with another contrast.

'But when the commandment came, sin re-vived, and I died.' Rom. vii. 9.

Here sin is *reviving*; its *domineering* influence exerts itself whenever the sinner is awakened from his spiritual stupor; and the sinner is said to *die*; all his false hopes forsake him, and he finds himself *dead to God.*

'Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be *dead indeed unto sin*, but *alive unto God*, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Rom. vi. 11.

In these words the sinner is *dead to sin*, and *alive to God*. Can two totally different states, and different characters be more forcibly described and contrasted?

‘For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.’ ver. 11.

According to this declaration, sin is *deceiving*, and *slaying* the sinner, that is, *tyranizing* over him in such a cruel manner as to deprive him of all power to *stand* against the terrible denunciations of God’s righteous law.

‘But I am carnal, sold under sin,’ ver. 14. Can the depravity of the human *heart*, and the complete *slavery* of *sin*, be depicted in deeper colours than the pencil of inspiration has done in the above words?

‘I find then a law—that when I would do good, evil is present with me,’

‘Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.’ Col. i. 13. How opposite this state from the former!

‘Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.’ ch. vi. 18.

But according to this solemn declaration, the Christian is *free* from the *tyranizing* influence of *sin*, and is now, through the *liberating grace* of God, able to *stand* in *obedience* to *righteousness*.

‘To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.’ ch. viii. 6.

‘If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.’ ver. 13.

These words need no comment. The opposition of sentiment between this and the other text, is as pointed as words can make it.

‘That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not

ver. 21. ‘The good that I would, I do not ; but the evil which I would not, that I do.’ ver. 19. ‘After the flesh, but after the Spirit.’ ver. 4. ‘I can do all things through Christ, which strengthens me.’ Phil. iv. 13.

Can any man seriously believe that both these classes of scripture apply to the *same* person, in the *same* state of mind ? How diametrically opposite are they one to the other ! Now, we say, that on Mr. W’s mode of interpretation they present a crude mass of contradictions ; and therefore would, if no other method of applying them were discovered, render the sacred scriptures themselves incredible.

But, by allowing the first class to be expressive of a penitent sinner, groaning for deliverance in the name of Jesus Christ ; and the second class expressive of one’s having obtained that deliverance ; you have an intelligible, harmonious, and consistent view of these otherwise contradictory scriptures.

Take the apostle’s metaphor, a man being in *captivity*, and you will see the expressive and forcible manner, in which the heart of the sinner, groaning under the burden of sin, and earnestly looking for deliverance, is pourtrayed. A man in captivity having heard that his deliverance is not only possible, but probably nigh at hand, looks through the grates of his prison, with eager delight, while he groans under his present bondage and affliction. So the penitent sinner, to whom liberty has been proclaimed in the name of Christ, although he groans under the weight of his guilt and pollution, looks forward with delight, and eagerly anticipates his deliverance. So says this penitent sinner, who is personated in the chapter we are considering ; ‘For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man.’ Though now in bondage to *the law of sin in his members*, he *delights* to view that

law of the *spirit of life in Christ Jesus*, which will eventually liberate him from his confinement. Nay, a criminal under condemnation, may delight in acknowledging the righteousness of the law which condemns him, although he knows he ought to suffer the just desert of his crimes, especially if that be intimately connected with another law which proclaims his liberty.

Mr. W. thinks it incredible that a man in this state of mind, should take delight in the law of God after the inward man. But I believe it will not appear at all incredible to those who have had a genuine experience of salvation from sin, and whose judgment has not been warped from the truth by erroneous principles, that a penitent sinner, convinced of the justice of that law which condemns him, and anticipating his future deliverance by the law of the Spirit, should feel a delight in that gracious law by which he expects to be set free. If, indeed, we were to adopt Mr. W's notion, that the first work of grace on the sinner's heart is regeneration, we might then conceive it impossible for an unregenerate sinner to delight in viewing the law of God, or delight in anticipating his deliverance from the *law of sin in his members*; because a man totally blind, deaf and dumb, as he can have no sight of spiritual objects, he cannot see the purity and excellence of the gospel plan of salvation. And I have no doubt, that, according to his views of regeneration, the apostle in the seventh of Romans, is describing a regenerated man: but the manifest confusion introduced into the sacred writings by such a supposition, is no contemptible proof, not only against Mr. Williston's interpretation of that chapter, simply considered, but also against it in connexion with his perceptions of regeneration: for if a regenerated man is one that is *yet carnal, sold under sin, doing the*

*evil that he hates*, and under *captivity to the law of sin*, where is the man that may not conclude himself regenerated? Are not the judgments of all men convinced, especially in their sober moments, that living a sinful life is wrong in itself? And therefore, those who suffer sin to domineer over them, give evidence that they allow their depraved inclination to gain the ascendancy over their judgments, while they yield to those things which are manifestly unjust. The distinguishing characteristic of a christian is, that he is made *free from sin*, it has not *dominion over him*, he is *spiritually minded*, and is under the *influence* of the spirit of grace.

Our antagonist, instead of meeting those arguments which were considered of most importance to establish the truth for which we contend, fixes his attention upon some observations which have but a remote bearing upon the main point at issue between us. Let us, however, attend to some of his remarks. "One of their most potent arguments is drawn from the characteristic names, by which the scriptures distinguish saints from sinners. They are frequently called perfect," p. 115. Not so: Our most potent argument is grounded upon explicit scripture testimony, which declares that the **HEARTS** of *sanctified* Christians are *purified* by faith; that they possess that 'perfect love which casteth out fear.' It is founded upon the infinite merits of the Lord Jesus, who *came to destroy the works of the devil*, and the energies of the Eternal Spirit which works mightily in the hearts of them that believe. These are the data, or the ground of our argumentation; and that the arguments derived from these sources are invulnerable, even in the estimation of Mr. W. is evident from his having passed the most of them over in perfect silence. It is true, in my letter to him upon this subject, I referred to those scriptures

which denominate Christians *perfect*, to shew that we were fully justified in calling them perfect: (see p. 194) and we likewise refer to such scriptures to prove, that, unless the Holy Ghost has applied unmeaning epithets to sanctified Christians, they must possess some kind of perfection: and, as all men must know that they are not perfectly immutable, nor perfect in judgment, or understanding, therefore the perfection to which they are to attain, must be what St. John calls '*perfect love*.'

Under this head, Mr. W. instead of meeting me upon this ground of argumentation which I occupied, has invented an argument of his own, and then concludes it easily refutable. No doubt he found it much easier to suggest his own objections, and confute them, than to look those in the face which his antagonist had stated, and which he found himself incompetent to encounter with success. After stating his imaginary argument, he says, "It ought to be carefully attended to;—I think I have candidly examined the argument, and do not see any thing in it which militates against our doctrine." What candour! What penetration! While writing professedly against a book containing a variety of scriptural arguments against his system of "sinful imperfection," he very deliberately closes his eyes upon the greater part of them, creates one of his own, and then—and what then? Why he has candidly weighed the argument—and very modestly thinks it does not militate against his doctrine! As we are not concerned in the vindication of *his* objections against his own scheme, we shall take no notice of his very "*candid attention*" to this wonder working argument, any farther than some of his observations have a bearing upon the controversy between us.

"The Methodists," says he, "distinguish Christians on earth by the justified, and the sanctified.

They consider all as justified, but only a part as sanctified. By the sanctified, they mean those who are wholly freed from sin. These they call perfect. Now we can find no such distinction as this, between Christians on earth"—"there is no intimation that this difference exists between Christians." p. 119. This is the burden of his argument upon this head. He contends that, as all Christians are "sinfully imperfect," so all are alike holy. But, if we mistake not, they are distinguished in scripture, by *babes*, or *little children*, *young men*, and *fathers*. 'I have written unto you FATHERS, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you YOUNG men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I have written unto you, LITTLE CHILDREN because ye have known the father.' 1 John ii. 13. Is there not a very obvious distinction here? The 12th verse fixes the sense in which St. John used the epithet *little* children: 'I have written to you, little children because *your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake*... No one will dispute, I believe, that, *when sins are forgiven* a man is *justified*; it is therefore the privilege of the weakest and youngest believer to have a witness of justification. But in the above passage, the apostle mentions *young men*, who have become *strong*, and who have *overcome the wicked one*; and of *fathers* who had known Christ Jesus from the beginning of their spiritual pilgrimage. Now if these were considered all belonging to one grade, why the above distinction? Were not these *fathers* and *young men* in a higher state of perfection, than the *little children*? Is it not respecting these that the apostle says, 'Herein is our love made perfect, because as he is, so are we in this world—'for perfect love, casteth out fear'—'He that feareth,' is yet a *babe*,

'is not made *perfect in love*'—he is only justified, not yet sanctified.

So St. Paul tells the Corinthians, 'And I brethren, could not speak unto you, as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, (i. e. fleshly, denoting the feebleness of their faith, as the word *carnal* sometimes means weakness of mind) 'even as unto babes in Christ,' (those who, like St. John's little children, only have justification,) 'I have fed you with milk,' (with such spiritual food as is suited to your childish, feeble state of mind) 'and not with meat,' (the strong meat of perfect love, or entire sanctification :) 'for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.' 'If I were to talk to you about the high attainments of perfect Christians, who are cleansed from all sin, the eminence of their spiritual attainments, would so far out-shine your's, that you would be discouraged. The glory encircling the heads of those fathers in Christ, who have come up to the exalted privileges of entire sanctification, would cast such a shade upon you, my Corinthian brethren, as would entirely sink you into despondency.' Now, although he calls them *babes in Christ*, he shews them that they were not yet delivered from the sins of their natures, by telling them that there were, 'envying and strife, and divisions among them.' But our venerable apostle uses a very different language, when writing to the Philippians. Respecting these he could say, that he 'Thanked God upon every remembrance of them.' While he expressed his doubts and fears respecting the *fallen Galatians*, and wrote out of much sorrow and anguish of heart to the *disputing Corinthians*, his heart overflowed with joy and gratitude on account of the prosperity of the Phillipians. Having long witnessed their fidelity to God, amid the sufferings with which they were afflicted, he exultingly said to them—' Being confident of this

very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.' But even these eminent saints he did not consider beyond the reach of danger, nor incapable of growth in grace—' And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment, that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and *without offence*, till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, (not *with indwelling sin*, anger, pride, evil desire, &c.) which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.'

Chap. i. 9—11.

The same distinction is marked in Heb. chap. v. 12—14. 'For when for a time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which are the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of **MILK**, and not of strong **MEAT**: For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for he is a **BABE**. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of **FULL AGE**.' That those *babes* in religious knowledge and experience, might arrive to *full age*, the apostle, in the next chapter thus exhorts them; 'Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrines of Christ, let us go on to *perfection*.' The distinction between *justification* and *sanctification* is marked with great precision, in Acts xxvi. 18. 'That they might receive forgiveness of sins,' which is *justification*, 'and inheritance among them that are *sanctified* by faith that is in me.' And this change from a less to a higher state of grace, is attested in 2 Cor. iii. 18. 'But we all with open face beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image *from GLORY to GLORY*, as by the Spirit of the Lord.' It is needless, I apprehend, to adduce more proof on this subject; it being manifest to all who read their bible with at-

tention, that this distinction is clearly stated, and illustrated by the inspired writers.

"The author of the letters seeks to support his doctrine by such passages, as 1 John i. 7. 'And the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son cleanseth us from all sin :' and Tit. ii. 14. 'Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' Now if these passages prove, that any are in this life cleansed from all sin, and redeemed from all iniquity, they will prove that it is the case with all the justified." p. 120. And suppose it would: must it follow that *none* are *cleansed* from *all sin*? Admitting Mr. W.'s conclusion, it only proves that we are under a mistake in believing that there are some *justified* persons not yet cleansed from *all unrighteousness*. And for my part, I would sooner believe *myself* under a mistake in this particular, than believe that the *holy God* has given a false testimony. But Mr. W.'s conclusion is manifestly erroneous. Those of whom St. John says, 'The blood of Christ cleanseth them from all sin,' are those *who* 'walk in the light as he is in the light,' before they are thus cleansed; which plainly proves that it is a cleansing which takes place *subsequent* to justification.

His mistake arises from confounding terms which are not used as synonymous in the holy scriptures; I mean *pardon* of sin, or justification, and *cleansing* from sin, or sanctification. Justification, in Christian theology, signifies the acquitting a penitent sinner from the *guilt* of his *actual* sin, for the sake of Jesus Christ: The *cleansing* his heart, signifies his being *purified* from the *inward* contamination of sin. One or two passages will satisfy the candid, that this is a scriptural distinction. 1 John i. 9. 'If we confess our (*actual*) sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our (*actual*) sins, and to cleanse us

from all, (inward, original, or contracted) unrighteousness.' If the *forgiving* our sins, be the same as the *cleansing* us from *all unrighteousness*, the Holy Spirit has used a most senseless tautology—To *forgive* us our sins—and to forgive us all unrighteousness! The same perspicuous distinction is visible in that striking passage in Isaiah, chap. vi. 7. '*Thine iniquity is taken away*, (that is, forgiven) *and thy sin is purged*,' that is, thou art *purified*, or *cleansed* from thy *heart* sin. So the apostle Paul, 2 Cor. vii. 1. 'Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us *cleanse* ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.' It will be admitted, I believe, that this was addressed to justified believers: but it seems they still needed *cleansing from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit*. When a penitent sinner is *justified* by faith in Christ, his actual sins are forgiven him; and when he is *sanctified* by the blood of the everlasting covenant, the defilement of sin is taken away. This sentiment is expressed by the royal Psalmist; 'Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities'—here is a prayer for justification—'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me'—here is a prayer for entire sanctification, or the inward *cleansing* of the Holy Spirit. Psalm li. 9, 10.

We know, indeed, that the word *sanctify* does not always apply to the inward cleansing of the heart. In its most ordinary signification it means to *set apart* to a particular use, whether sacred or profane, but more generally for sacred uses. Thus the temple, the priests, the people of Israel, the holy land, and the Sabbath, are said to have been sanctified, that is, *set apart* for God's special service. But when the *hearts* of sinners are said to be *cleansed*, *purified*, or *sanctified*, it means that all the powers of soul and body are set apart from the

service of sin, and consecrated to the special service of God—‘ Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God’—‘ If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy : for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.’ 1 Cor. iii. 17, and vi. 19. ‘ God, says the Psalmist, hath set apart the godly for himself.’ ‘ Being justified freely by his grace, and sanctified’ by the efficacious blood of Christ, all their powers are consecrated to God, and He *dwells* in them by his Holy Spirit.

Mr. Williston, in considering the argument drawn from the command of God to his people to be holy, has a remark worthy of observation. “ We will acknowledge,” says he, “ that this argument proves that sinful imperfection is wrong, and, on our part, inexcusable ; and that sinless perfection is our duty.” p. 121. Is it not very extraordinary that a man should proclaim himself the vindicator of a principle that is wrong ! If “ sinful imperfection” is *wrong*, as he says he will acknowledge it is, is he not the professed advocate of a wrong, and of course, a sinful doctrine. To what incredible absurdities does error conduct a man ! But this is not all. Mr. W. lays it down as a fundamental principle that God has decreed, and that his Almighty power is engaged to enforce this decree, that *all* Christians must be *sinfully* imperfect while they live. If then “ sinful imperfection is wrong,” God’s decrees are wrong, and He, in enforcing those decrees is *doing wrong*. O error ! How long wilt thou persist in insulting Jehovah ? More yet : Notwithstanding God has decreed that all Christians shall be all their life “ sinfully imperfect,” and has engaged Himself to see that decree executed, it is *our duty* to be sinlessly perfect ! So says our vindicator of reformed doctrines. And in so saying, he fixes the indelible mark of absur-

dity upon his system. Will he then, after affirming that God's decrees and acts are holy, declare in the face of the world that it is our *duty* to oppose these decrees. I am at a loss for language to express my astonishment that any man in his senses can advance such incredible propositions. May I be allowed to express my full conviction, that it is impossible for any man understandingly to believe such manifest absurdities. This consideration alone is amply sufficient to ruin the system we are opposing. Mr. W. from the consideration, that God's law is *perfect, pure, just, holy* and *good*, (see Psalm xix. 7, 8, 9. and Rom. vii. 12) is constrained to acknowledge, (to save himself from the charge of infidelity to which his absurd scheme manifestly tends,) that God has commanded us to be holy ; although by such acknowledgment, he declares that God's decrees for which he so zealously contends in another place, are *wrong*. Reader ; the decrees of God are *not wrong* ; but the decrees of Hopkinsianism advocated by Mr. W. himself being judge, are wrong, and sinful ; you are, therefore, commanded to shun them.

In p. 124 and 125 he blames me for intimating that his doctrine has an unholy origin and tendency, by permitting people to foster the evils of their hearts. I acknowledge I charged his scheme with these defects ; and I see no cause from any thing he has said to alter my opinion. He, however, thinks his doctrine does not permit people to indulge themselves in sin. But I affirm that it not only *permits* them to sin, but it declares that God has *decreed*, and does now effect that decree by his own operation, that Christians *shall* live in sin, that grace may abound ; that pride, anger, and hardness of heart, are now necessary to promote humility, meekness, and gentleness. Now I ask, if these evils are essential to the promotion of christian vir-

tues, is it not right that they should indulge themselves in them? And if our advocate for "sinful imperfection," is also an advocate for his doctrine of decrees, does he not plead for the existence of sin in the hearts and lives of Christians? And if Christians are to regulate their lives according to the principles they believe, must not all Mr. W.'s admirers, make "sinful imperfection," the standard of their conduct? Were they to do otherwise, would they not rise in opposition to what he calls God's decrees? To me, this consequence seems inevitable. Indeed, from an impartial survey of his book, it really appears to me, that he has taken much more pains to plead for sin, has been at more labour to prove that God has decreed it, that it is according to His will and agreeable to His mind, and is productive of great good, than he has to show the necessity and utility of holiness.

On this subject Mr. W. asks; "Do the members of our Churches obtain the idea from their ministers, that it is matter of small consequence how they live?" p. 126. To this we answer, that they "obtain the idea from their minister" in Durham, that God's eternal decrees secure sin in the hearts of all believers (and I suppose, probably unbelievers too,) and that "pride, hardness of heart, self-seeking, and worldly-mindedness, impenitence and unbelief" "are essential to their growth in grace; for he has said, p. 114. "One argument which seems calculated to establish the doctrine of sinful imperfection in this life, is the representation which the scriptures make of a growth in grace." It is true, they do not obtain the idea that it is matter of *small* consequence how they live; because it is of the utmost importance for them to live in sin; otherwise, according to this "one argument" they could not grow in grace; and, as a growth in grace is essential to their future felicity, and as they can-

not grow in grace, unless they live in sin, it is of unspeakable consequence that they are careful to live so as to be denominated sinfully imperfect.

Nay, more ; according to Mr. W. sin, *heart sin*, is essentially necessary to make our devotional exercises acceptable—"No man, let him be who he will, can pray acceptably to the God of Israel, if he does not have a present sense of the sinfulness of his heart. He must be convinced not only that he *had*, but that he now *has* a sinful heart." p. 112. Of what sovereign use is sin. It not only contributes to the perfection and happiness of the universe, but gives wings to our prayers, and renders them acceptable before the *holy Throne of God*. How different, however, were the sentiments of the royal psalmist of Israel. Although not a modern reformer, he may be allowed his testimony in support of the "essential doctrines" of God our Saviour. *If I regard iniquity in my HEART, the Lord will not hear me.* Psalm lxvi. 18. Mr. W. says that they must "*have sin dwelling in them*" in order that their prayers might be accepted; but the Psalmist says, *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.* What more a man can say in favour of sin, I know not—than to say—God decreed and brings it to pass—it contributes to the good of the universe—it is necessary to a growth in grace—to make us humble—and to render our prayers acceptable. Ought not Christians to be guarded against parting with an *enemy* who is so *friendly*, and who does them such essential service?

Suppose one of his disciples, who duly appreciates the conclusiveness of this "one argument" of his minister, were exhorted to get rid of his pride, &c. if he were consistent, would he not reply, 'It is my duty to *grow in grace*; and as my minister has informed me, and quoted scripture to prove it too, that if I were purified from these evils I could

not grow in grace ; therefore it is of the first consequence for me to harbour pride, impenitence, &c. Would you have me turn *perfectionist*, and plead for purity of heart ? I have not so learned Christ. I have been taught, that sin is for my present and future happiness. And would you have me strive against that which is so essential to my happiness ? As the effect cannot be produced without the existence and operation of the cause, and as growth in grace is the effect of living in sin, I think the more I indulge in sin, the more rapid my progress in holiness. I confess, indeed, that my reason perceives the inconsistency of such doctrine ; but I have been taught by my minister, not to meet my antagonist in the *field of reason*. And my minister, must, I think, be a wise man ; for if he did not graduate to the *Senior class* in college, he probably arrived to the *Sophomores class* ;\* and he insists that, as

\* This is an allusion to what Mr. W. has said. p. 118. "That the inspired writers have not been led to invent any means, which shall, at one view, exhibit both parts of their character, the renewed, and the unrenewed nature. The colleges have invented a compound name for one of their classes, calling them *Sophomores*, i. e. (being literally translated into English) *wise fools*"—"But the scriptures have not furnished us with any such compound terms, to distinguish such as have some holiness mixed with some sin ; some wisdom with some folly ;" Is not this an implied acknowledgment that the inspired writers were strangers to his doctrine of sinful imperfection ? Or are we to suppose that the Holy Spirit himself was not sufficient master of language either to invent, or to compound some terms which might convey an appropriate idea of the Christian character ? What a pity that the wisdom of the colleges of modern days, had not been known in the balcyon days of immediate inspiration, that some term might have been selected sufficiently expressive of the Christian character ! But this subject is too sacred, and of too much importance to be decided by a mere allusion to a collegiate regulation. As the holy scriptures are strangers to any such compound terms to describe the Christian, we may safely infer that their authors were totally ignorant of such *wise fools* as Mr. W. has described. They have said in express terms, free from all the ambiguity of scholastic refinements, *Old things are passed away ; behold all things are become new*, 2 Cor. v. 17. *Whosoever committeth sin, is the servant*

to Christianity, we must all remain in this class, that is, be *wise fools*, as long as we live.' Thus does this absurd doctrine sanctify unholiness, and convert sin into an instrument of salvation. O how long shall men be blinded by such sophistry. Let it not be thought the effect of intemperate zeal against my antagonist, if I say it is a soul destroying doctrine. The holy God hath said, *The soul that sinneth, it shall die.* *He that committeth sin is of the devil.* *If ye die in your sins, ye cannot be saved.* But this doctrine declares that all men, the best not excepted, with all the aid of the blood of Christ, and the energies of the eternal Spirit, engaged in their behalf, they must live in sin every moment : If, therefore, any assume the license it gives them, by living in sin continually, as the word of the Eternal cannot fail, they must inevitably be damned ; therefore it is a destructive doctrine.

Mr. W. says, p. 122. "Perhaps there is not one of my eight sermons on which his remarks are so severe in this respect, as the sermon on the sinful imperfection of good men in this life." This I grant is correct. And I feel myself highly honoured by this remark. Yes, I glory in being permitted through the superabundant grace of God, to be

*of sin*, John viii. 34. They do not say, *some of the old things are passed away, and some things are become new*; but *all things are become new*. Neither do they say, *he that committeth some sin is the servant of God, but he that committeth sin is of the devil*; and *when ye were the servants of sin, ye were FREE FROM RIGHTEOUSNESS*—*Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of SIN might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve SIN.* Here is no intimation of a "mixed state of some sin and some holiness;" nor no compound terms descriptive of the "*renewed and unrenewed part*" existing in the same heart at the same time. And it is hoped, that no Christian will believe that more credit is due to a metaphorical allusion to a technical term of the colleges, than is due to the imposing evidence of divine revelation. How barren of evidence and argument must that cause be, which forces its advocates to such means for its support.

associated in this respect with those who have borne such a pointed, explicit, and decided testimony against *sin*, that cruel enemy to God and man. Read the holy scriptures—and see with what holy indignation the inspired men of God, denounced sin. All the awful thunders of Sinai are made to roar in the ears of guilty transgressors. **HĒ THAT COMMITTETH SIN HATH NOT SEEN HIM NOR KNOWN HIM.** And is it a crime in me, to follow the current of eternal truth, in bearing a zealous and decided testimony against this common enemy of man's happiness ? In the fear and love of God, do I feel constrained to warn Mr. Williston, and all others to beware how they preach and write in favour of sin, either in heart or life, either by referring it to God as its author, or by insinuating that it will have a beneficial influence upon man ; lest they be found to fight against God, and to bless that which the Lord abhors. But I never meant to insinuate that all presbyterian professors live in sin, or that there were not pious and holy Christians among them ; but this I maintain, without any fear of being successfully contradicted; that all who are holy, exhibit a practical refutation of their doctrine, and fight against their own decrees. And it is well for mankind, that immutable truth has so much influence upon the moral world, as to prevent the pernicious effects of speculative error : but holiness no more flows from that doctrine which makes God the author of sin, and which says it is necessary to a growth in grace, than pure water does from a muddy fountain.

Let us, however, examine this “one argument” which says, that living a sinful life is essential to a growth in grace. Are not sinfulness and holiness directly opposite, in their nature, tendency and effects ? Was not sin, in the first instance, destructive of holiness ? And must that which was once destructive of holiness, now be necessary to repro-

duce it? How absurd! This argument was exposed in my letter to Mr. W. p. 200—204.

He is no more happy in his scripture proof.—The following he has quoted to prove that sinfulness is essential to a growth in grace: ‘He that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger.’ ‘The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.’ What apposite proof! He that hath *clean hands*, respresent a *filthy heart*, stained with pride, anger, &c.? The path of the *just shineth more and more*. Is the *just man*, one that seeketh *unjust gain* by holding of bribes; or one that is continually under the power of *unjust desires*, so that when he “would do” *honestly*, this *evil desire* is present with him, and prevents him? These texts prove his doctrine just as much as the following would prove that the earth is continually scorched with drought, and overshadowed with thick clouds; ‘He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and good, and sendeth rain upon the just and unjust.’ Why did not this strenuous advocate of *sin*, that filthy offspring of Satan, quote some text which said that sinfulness is necessary to a growth in grace? The reason is very obvious. There is not a text in all the bible which even intimates that any sin, any sinful temper, word or action, contributes either directly or indirectly, to our growth in grace. If there had been any such, I presume he would, instead of quoting those which prove directly against him, have produced them in vindication of this sinful doctrine, which seems so exceedingly dear to his heart.

Another argument in favour of his doctrine, he tells us, “may be derived from the directions given to examine ourselves, to determine the truth of the work of grace in our hearts.” p. 114. A man must be hard pressed indeed to resort to such arguments

as these. Let us try the strength of this. St. Paul says to the Corinthians, ‘Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith.’ According to Mr. W. there can be no need of examining ourselves, unless there be sin in our hearts. If, therefore, on examination we find we have sin, such as *pride, anger, and selfishness*, we must conclude we have the grace of *humility, meekness, and disinterestedness*; for he infers that all who conclude themselves *delivered* from those evils must be *graceless*. Suppose I were to say to my son, nine years old,— ‘*Lemuel, are your hands clean?*’ ‘Yes, pa.’— How do you know? “Because on examination I find many *spots of dirt* on them.” Sit down, my son, you have proved that you have washed your hands *thoroughly*, and are *every whit clean*. Come William, let me examine you. Are your hands clean? ‘Yes, Sir.’ How know you that? “Because I can find no *filth* on them.” Why, my son, you are certainly deceived. They cannot be clean; neither is it true that you have washed them, unless there are many *filthy stains* upon them. Go therefore and wash until you can find these stains, and then you may conclude yourself *every whit clean*. Would my boys think I meant to ridicule them? or would they conclude I must be crazy?

Well, says Mr. W. to his congregation, Examine yourselves and determine whether you have grace or not. ‘I have, says one, and if the doctrine drawn from your text is true, I think I must have much grace: for I find I have so much *pride, anger, selfishness, blindness of mind, and hardness of heart*, that I think myself the chief of sinners.’ Aye, that’s true, says Mr. W. You must be an elect-sinner—saint, or at any rate a “sophomore;” for all the bible saints are such “mixed characters,” that they must, in order to grow in grace, have some sin, and “some holiness.” You shall cer-

tainly persevere. But, says another, ' I think I have grace ; for, on a careful examination of my heart, I find that load of condemnation for my actual sins, under which I formerly groaned, is now removed ; and although, after I was awakened to a true sense of my miserable state by nature and practice, I saw myself the *chief of sinners*, yet I find a great change in my disposition, character, views of spiritual things, and source of pleasure. Those destructive evils of my heart, pride, anger, selfishness, &c. which were formerly rankling within, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin in my members, are, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, eradicated ; and I now find divine peace, love, joy in the Holy Ghost, meekness, gentleness, and humility. My soul is continually watered from on high ; and I can praise my God from a delightful sense of his pardoning grace. Through the continual influence of the Holy Spirit, and the unceasing application of the merits of Christ, I have a victory over my besetting sins, and my heart burns with an ardent love to my adorable God, and to all mankind.' Ah ! unhappy man, says Mr. W. you are deceived. You never knew the plague of your heart. The Methodists, those *ministers of Satan*, have deluded you. If you had grace, and if you were growing in grace, instead of feeling love, joy, humility, meekness, and patience, you would feel hatred, sorrow, pride, anger, and fretfulness : for I lay it down as a certain indication of deception, if any of my *wise fools* ever profess to arrive to that state in which they think they have dominion over sin, and are made *wise* unto salvation. What admirable divinity this ! How conformable to the holy scriptures !

But, " wherein does our doctrine favour sin ?\*

\* Mr. W. in a note p. 125 has a remark upon Mr. Fletcher, in which he thinks Mr. Fletcher misapprehended his antago-

Do we make void the law? Do we say it is repealed, or abated?" p. 122. To this we answer, that the doctrine contained in the vindication *favours* sin in a variety of ways. 1. The section we are examining is a professed vindication of "sinful imperfection." 2. It declares that God has fore-ordained, and brings to pass all the sins in the universe. 3. That all these sins are for the good of mankind. 4. Although it is wrong to live in sin, and although God has forbidden it under the severest penalties, yet he has decreed that all christians

nists, because he represents them as pleading for sin in the heart. But, Mr. Fletcher was too good a man *wilfully* to misrepresent, and too acute in his mental powers, and too well versed in the controversy in which he was engaged, *ignorantly* to misapprehend Mr. Hill. It is undeniably evident, that if Mr. Hill believed, as Mr. Williston does, that God has decreed sin; and that He brings to pass just so much as is pleasing to Him: that sin works for our good; and that our prayers cannot be acceptable without it; if he advocated his doctrine of decrees, as he undoubtedly did, and wished the prayers of God's people to be accepted, he must have plead for heart sin.

I wish all Calvinists might read that masterly performance of Mr. Fletcher. It has been pronounced by one, who cannot be suspected of any partiality towards the Methodists, to be unanswerable. 'He certainly put to flight the antagonists, for which their survivors will never, I believe, cordially forgive him. It is a fact, that a certain Calvinist, being asked if he had read The Checks, replied, *No; nor do I intend to read them; for were I to do so, I should turn Arminian, a thing I am determined never to do while I live.*' Nightingale's Portraiture of Methodism, p. 464.

How, indeed, any man of understanding can read those *Checks*, without being convinced of the errors of Calvinism, is no less inconceivable, than that Mr. W. should think he has invalidated any one of the author's arguments, simply by saying that Mr. Fletcher misapprehended his antagonists. The piety, the wisdom, the deep penetration, and the strong and convincing arguments of the Rev. John Fletcher, will be admired as long as sound scriptural Christianity shall be believed; and also remain a lasting monument of the pernicious errors of the inconsistent system he so conscientiously, and so successfully controverted. Were it not that Hopkinsianism differs in some of its branches from Calvinism, the works of that great and good man, would entirely supersede the necessity of any such inferior performances, as the present publication.

shall live in sin, and shall continually break His commandments. 5. That living in sin is essential to a growth in grace, and an infallible mark of our having grace. I know not what more can be said in favour of sin. Suppose I were to offer a plea in favour of holiness; what more could I say to recommend it, than to affirm, 1. That God has decreed that man should be holy. 2. That he produces holiness in the human heart. 3. That it is essential to happiness. 4. That God has commanded man to be holy. It might, perhaps, abate the force of my plea, in some measure, were I to add, God has decreed to counteract the influence of his holy law, by producing sin in the human heart; and therefore, were I to add, that God's decree and command conjointly operate to the production of holiness, I know not what more could be said in its recommendation. But Mr. W. affirms that all these (the commandments excepted) are engaged to keep sin in the human heart as long as we live, and therefore I think his doctrine favours sin.

"Do we make void the law?" Yes, at a stroke. Irresistible decrees which operate universally, and are particularly engaged to prevent the Christian from keeping the law, render the whole law totally useless. It might as well be repealed at once, as to stand a useless monitor to those who cannot obey its mandate without rising in direct hostility to universal decrees.

We shall soon see that such is the inconsistency of the scheme we are opposing, that, in order to defend it from the lacerating strokes of eternal truth, Mr. W. shuts heaven against every individual of the human family, unless they go there contrary to their desire. "In heaven there will be the most perfect humility; therefore proud spirits cannot desire *such a heaven.*" p. 224. But according to the section we are now considering, *pride* is one

of the distinguishing characteristics of a Christian—*Pride*, and many other *radical* evils, must remain in the *heart after it is radically* changed by the *Spirit of holiness*, and accompany it through every stage of its spiritual progress; and yet a *proud* spirit cannot *desire* such a *heaven*. Does our vindicator mean to insinuate that a man can harbour *pride*, and not be *proud*? be *selfish*, and yet be *disinterested*? be *angry*, and not indulge *anger*? and earnestly *desire* heaven, while possessing a passion which totally excludes the possibility of such a desire? What a jargon of contradictions, absurdities, and incredible mysteries, are contained in the bowels of this crude system. Is it possible, without destroying its life, to purify it by the potions of truth, so as to present the beautiful and healthy countenance of Christianity? If your patience, reader, is not exhausted, by having gazed so long at this offspring of inconsistency, first begotten in the bed of heathenism, brought forth and named christianity by Augustin, nursed in the church of Rome, and baptized "*doctrines of grace*" by Calvin, weaned and fed by the synod of Dort, and whose features were horribly distorted by Hopkins, and exhibited to public view in this disfigured form by Mr. W.—I say, if you are not sickened at beholding this ill-fated child of misfortune, you are requested to take another impartial survey of him. Here follow some of his features. 1. God is holy. Vindication p. 11. 2. He decreed sin. 3. And brings it to pass by his own agency. p. 25, 30. 4. He has forbidden sin. p. 44. 5. Notwithstanding, sin is for the greatest good of the universe. p. 33. 6. Saints are holy. p. 118. 7. All the saints live in sin. p. 120. 8. They are all carnal, proud, angry, &c. p. 109. 9. No proud man can desire heaven. p. 224. 10. All Christians, though proud, desire heaven for its own sake. ibid. 11. All men are

bound to obey God's law. p. 121. 12. God has decreed no man shall obey it in this life. ibid. 13. All men have natural ability to love God with all the heart. p. 229. 14. No man can, for want of moral ability, love God with all the heart, because sin must dwell in some part of the heart at least. p. 232. 15. A man must be *disinterested* to enter heaven. p. 213. 16. The best of Christians are *selfish* while they live. p. 109. 17. God's *revealed* will is that man should be humble, &c. p. 121. 18. His *secret* will is that all Christians should be proud. p. 120. 19. God's *revealed* will is that all reprobates might be saved. p. 154. 20. His *secret* will is that all reprobates should be damned. p. 87. 21. These reprobates were put into a salvable state. p. 59. 22. God never designed they should be saved. p. 97. 23. God, by an efficient operation upon the human heart, produces all sin, and all kinds of sin. p. 25. 24. Yet all these sins may be avoided. p. p. 59, 121. 25. All the actions of every individual are under the irresistible control of Almighty God. p. 30. 26. And yet man is a free, moral, and accountable agent. p. 20. This is the image of Hopkinsianism. Every feature is taken from Mr. Williston's book. Not that he has hewn out this unnatural figure himself. He has taken it as he found it in the rubbish. He has only attempted to blow off some of the Geneva dust, and to pare off some of the bluff excrescences, and to draw an "eastern veil" over some of its offensive limbs. He is determined, however, to defend it against all assaults; for he seems fully persuaded it has a divine origin. However mistaken he may be, we must give him credit for his sincerity in exerting his intellectual powers in pourtraying this ill-shapen image. Now I ask, is not law, gospel, truth, and consistency all sacrificed upon the altar of this divinity?

In p. 132 he has this sentence : " Now I think it cannot be, that the same religion, the self-same work of the Spirit, should produce such directly opposite effects in different hearts." It seems our antagonist yields with great reluctance to the idea that there are any real Christians among the Methodists ; and yet he dreads uttering such an exclusive proscription as should class him among bigots ; and therefore he has so much catholicism as to think there *may be* some Christians among us. We thank him for this apparent *mercy*, because we consider it purely gratuitous ; for his narrow contracted system would lead him to exclude every man from any claim to the Christian character, who does not cordially embrace *his* doctrine of decrees : and therefore we rejoice that he manifests so much Christian charity, as to evince a *desire* to extend his benevolence beyond the limits prescribed him by his exclusive system. We feel, however, no anxiety in vindicating our claim to the Christian character. Our doctrines, thank God, are open to all, and our conduct is under the inspection of the public eye. And notwithstanding the prevalence of Hopkinsian doctrine, we trust divine love, in some measure, will counteract the influence of human decrees. No exclusive system of religion has yet gained the sanction of legislative authority in this western world ; and, it is greatly hoped, notwithstanding all the exertions to the contrary, it never may. And as to Mr. W. he cannot, if he would, usurp the throne of God ; and therefore his good or ill opinion will not be the rule of divine decision, either now or hereafter.

We are, however, fully of his opinion, that the spirit of God, does not, nor cannot produce such opposite effects in different hearts ; any more than He can *produce sin and holiness in the same heart*. The holy Spirit must produce effects correspondent.

to His own nature, which is holy; and therefore, operating upon a believing heart, He effects a thorough cleansing from the filthiness of sin, introducing in its place gospel holiness: hence it is impossible for those who conscientiously follow the dictates of this Spirit, to live continually, as Mr. W. contends all Christians do, in sin. ‘If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.’

“Is it not,” says Mr. W. “because the Spirit of God does not dwell in them, that they are not made sensible of indwelling sin? It is one part of the office of the Holy Spirit, to convince of sin,” John xvi. 3. p. 136. How unwilling is our accuser to admit it possible for any of us to have God’s Spirit. Notwithstanding his professed catholicism, and all his apparent candour, the bigoted sentiments of his heart, or the unhappy effects of his system, will exhibit themselves. It is well for us that we are amenable to a judge of more impartial character, even Him who has said, ‘In every nation he that feareth me, and worketh righteousness is accepted;’ And from the partial decision of the pastor of the congregation of Durham, who professes so much perfect charity, we appeal to Him who will judge *righteous judgment*. I shall therefore refer our vindication from these degrading insinuations to that day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest. I wish, however, to rescue a blessed portion of scripture from the improper use our vindicator has made of it, John xvi. 8. It is *there* asserted that it is the office of the Holy Spirit, not only to *convince of sin*, but also of *righteousness and of judgment*. The same Spirit which convinces sinners of their sinfulness, also convinces them, when delivered from their sins, of *righteousness*; for the ‘Love of God it shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost.’ We may also remark the incorrect view in which

Mr. W. has exhibited us to the public. Any one might infer from reading his book, that the Methodists never confess their native vileness, nor their actual sins. Such insinuations are so very erroneous, that they do not deserve, nor shall they receive, from me, any direct refutation. Were it expedient, it would be an easy matter to present the reader with some of the most affecting acknowledgments of human depravity, as well as the guilt of actual sin, by Methodist converts. But as these are stubborn facts, supported by a host of living witnesses, and therefore stand as living monuments against Mr. W.'s candour as an author, I shall not waste my time to adduce their testimony. I believe he will one day have no little remorse, for having written so many unkind things respecting his neighbours. May God forgive him when he repents, and makes restitution.

Mark the order of God in saving souls. He first, by various means, convinces them of sin. When thus convinced of the sinfulness of their *hearts* and *lives*, they see and feel the necessity of *repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ*. Exercising a godly sorrow for sin, and mourning on account of having abused the long forbearance of the God of love, and looking with a broken believing heart to the Lord Jesus, they are pardoned, and restored to divine favour. Walking in the light of God's countenance, they have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth them from all sin. Now while a sinner is groaning under the painful exercise of repentance, he is not only sensible of his guilt on account of his actual sin, but he is also deeply sensible of the depravity of his heart. He knows from painful experience that his heart is *desperately wicked, and deceitful above all things*. Under this penetrating sense of his guilt and vileness, he offers up strong cries and tears to him that is able and willing

to save him. But when delivered from his guilt, and washed in the blood of the Lamb, he is as sensible of the change wrought in his heart, as he was before sensible of his guilt and depravity; and is now as ready to declare the loving kindness of his God in sending him deliverance, as he was before to confess his vileness, ingratitude and guilt. Will any experienced Christian affirm that because he was once guilty and polluted, he must remain so always? Is not God able, and has he not declared his willingness to

‘Change this old rebellious heart  
‘To conquer and renew?’

Has he not declared that he *will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and remember their sins and iniquities no more.* And when their sins are taken away, may they not declare it to the honour of the grace of Jesus Christ? When their hearts *are purified,* may they not modestly, for the honour of their great sanctifier, *profess* that *purity* of heart? If they were to deny it, and from a voluntary humility, confess themselves still vile, guilty, and wretchedly sinful, would they not dishonour God by denying his gracious work? Is it not as ungrateful to deny what God has done for them in the great work of redemption and salvation, as it would be to refuse him the honour of their creation and preservation?

When a man has been raised from a bed of languishing to a state of health, must he, for fear of derogating from the honour of his kind and skilful physician, still confess himself sick, and say he is yet affected with a consuming disease? May he not say with as much truth and propriety, now ‘*I am well,*’ as he could before have said, ‘*I am sick?*’ Would this frank confession convict him of deceit? Or would any of his sensible neighbours say, ‘It cannot be. And to prove it, look at yonder man pining away with the consumption. He is not well.

And if you think yourself restored to health, it must be because you were never sensible of your disease. This we infer from the fact, that your neighbour is still sick.<sup>7</sup> Would such reasoning be applauded as conclusive? I think not. What shall we say? Because Mr. Williston himself, still groans under the power of the carnal mind, does it certainly follow that every one else must also groan under it as long as they live? Is it not possible that some of his neighbours, may have experienced the cleansing efficacy of Jesus' blood, so as to have been radically changed, and delivered from their impurity? And will he affirm that because they humbly profess their gracious deliverance, they are deceived, and are destitute of the spirit of God. He may do so, if he pleases. But it is doubted whether such conduct will add to his reputation as a man of understanding, or as a minister of the Lord Jesus, who came *to destroy the works of the devil, and to save his people from their sins.*

The doctrine of Perfection should not be considered as a mere point of speculation; but it must, if we would be benefited by it, have an experimental influence upon our hearts, and a practical influence upon our lives. And let it be remembered, that the perfection for which we contend, is very far from that self-righteous spirit, which induces a man to pride himself in his own attainments, to boast of his own goodness; and from the loftiness of his own heart, to look down with sovereign contempt upon others—this spirit is a certain indication of an un-humbled heart: But the evangelical perfection insisted on in the holy scriptures, is always accompanied with a deep sense of our own littleness, unworthiness, and undeservings. Humility, patience, and resignation to the divine dispensations, are the characteristics of a Christian whose heart is purified from the defilements of sin. While he beholds the

ineffible glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ, he sinks into nothing in his own estimation, ascribing all the glory of his salvation to the Triune God.

Mr. Williston has made some extracts from the journal of President Edwards, and others, in which they lament their sinfulness, and the remains of moral pollution in their hearts, in order to prove that all must continue under the power of sin every moment of their lives. But even allowing that these affecting acknowledgements were the genuine fruits of their Christian experience, and not the effects of those erroneous principles in which they were educated ; it by no means militates against the necessity and possibility of an entire deliverance from inward contamination. It is well known that those who are instructed in the Presbyterian school, are taught to believe that they must groan under those heart evils while they live ; and therefore, instead of looking for an entire deliverance from them, as they should, they are content to groan under them, not expecting deliverance until death. It is very similar with those who do not believe it their privilege to attain to a witness of justification in this life. If they act consistently with their unbelief, however sensible they may be of their guilt, they will not seek for, nor expect to find a pardon in this life : hence they go on in the darkness of sin and guilt continually. But must the inexperience of such persons be brought to confront the explicit testimony of scripture, and the happy experience of thousands, who can joyfully testify that the *Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins?*

That after a sinner is justified freely by grace, he is made deeply sensible, and perhaps more so than ever, of the impurity of his nature, we freely admit ; not, indeed, because he is more impure, but because the light of God's Spirit shining into his soul, now

more clearly discovers to him the native impurity of his heart : and this discovery of his impurity, of the roots of bitterness within, is an evident conviction of the necessity of that inward cleansing so essential to sanctify the heart ; that it may be a fit temple for the Holy Ghost. This humiliating view of the sinfulness of our natures, after being restored to divine favour, has caused some sincere Christians to doubt of their acceptance in the beloved ; and they have, for a time, cast away their confidence ; not duly considering the obvious distinction between a sense of condemnation, which is the experience of a penitent sinner previous to justification, and a sense of inward impurity, unattended with guilt, which is the experience of all justified believers previous to their being *cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit*. While the soul is exercised under this painful sense of original contamination, it may nevertheless rejoice in the light of God's reconciled countenance, feeling conscious of his pardoning mercy ; but in order to retain the favour of God, the soul must, in the use of all the means of grace, earnestly seek after a total destruction of the man of sin, and to be filled with that *perfect love which casteth out fear*.

And to encourage them in this holy pursuit they should recollect, that God has promised so to *Circumcise their hearts, that they may love the Lord their God with all their hearts*. The sacred character of God—the holy commandments—the nature of spiritual happiness, and all the promises of the gospel—all conspire together, to invite the believer to a diligent seeking after the entire sanctification of his nature. It is *necessary* to fit us for the enjoyment of a holy God in the kingdom of glory : It is our *duty*, because God has commanded us to be holy, because he is holy : It is our privilege, because he has promised, that *if we walk in the light, as he*

*is in the light, we shall have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son shall cleanse us from all sin.* All the gracious promises of the gospel, indeed, are designed to excite in us a confident expectation, that if we improve the grace bestowed upon us with fidelity, that he will cut short his work in righteousness, and cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of his holy Spirit.

While, therefore, we admit, that all Christians, are deeply sensible of the infirmities of their nature, we rejoice in being authorized from every view of the economy of grace, to proclaim unto God's people the unspeakable privilege of a full conformity to the righteous and holy image of God. Is not the Lord Jesus as able now, since exalted at the right hand of the Majesty on high, to dethrone Satan from the human heart, and to cast out sin, as he was in the days of his flesh, to cast out devils, raise the dead, &c. If the impotence of these afflicted people did not hinder the operation of his power, and the demonstration of his goodness then, shall our native weakness, or inward pollution, prevent the exercise of his powerful loving kindness now, in cleansing our hearts from all unrighteousness? Shall it be thought a thing incredible that our God-man, should raise spiritually dead souls to life, by breathing into them the quickening influence of his holy Spirit? Is the fatal leprosy so deeply rooted in the heart, that it is beyond the power of Jesus Christ to exterminate it? Shall we, by our systems, or our unbelief, limit the power and goodness of the Holy One of Israel?

And after having purified the heart from its moral pollution, he is able and willing to keep such souls from falling into sin again. However inadequate they may be in themselves, to withstand the numerous temptations to sin, yet if they watch and

pray, God has pledged himself to keep them every moment. ‘He that keepeth Israel never slumbereth nor sleepeth.’ No; not a hair of their head shall fall to the ground without his notice. And the inspiring promise, ‘I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee’ is the comfort and support of all God’s faithful people. While, therefore, those who *turn aside to vanity*, can derive no comfort from the promises which are made to persevering believers, the faithful believer himself may comfort himself at all times from the consideration of God’s unchangeable goodness towards him. While he is found obedient to the requirements of the Gospel, he may rest assured that God will keep him from falling; and also cause every thing to *work together for his good*.

Behold then, happy believer, your inestimable privilege. You are called to come up higher into the enjoyment of God. Be not satisfied with low attainments in religion. ‘Rejoice in the Lord alway; yea, again I say rejoice,’ saith saint Paul to the Philippians. Cast away your fears and doubts, and go forth into the land flowing with milk and honey. See the majestic river of redeeming love, issuing from the throne of God and the Lamb, widening as it gently rolls along.—Its refreshing waters are sufficient to satisfy your most expanded desires. If your heart is right with God, you desire to be absorbed in divine love. Away, then, with all your excuses, your sins, your doubts; no longer let your heart be divided between God and the world. What are all the pleasures that this transitory world can afford you, when compared to those sublimer joys, those transporting comforts which the sanctified soul enjoys in communion with God! Let then, this be your object, to be lost and swallowed up, as it were, in the ocean of eternal love.

Let for a moment, sects and parties stand aside.

Reach forth your soul to God. Behold the exalted privilege to which Christianity invites you. It is a plentiful feast, where Jesus Christ himself attends to serve his disciples, with the reviving fruits of his heavenly kingdom. To induce you to come, he condescends to invite you himself, to draw you with the cords of his dying love, to compel you with the persuasive eloquence, and divine harmony of gospel promises, commands, and exhortations. Will you deny yourself so rich a repast? Keep nothing back, surrender up your whole soul and body to God, and he will take you into a sacred nearness to himself—He will ravish your soul with his joyful presence, guide you continually by his counsel, defend you by his power, supply all your wants by his unbounded goodness, and finally take you to the lofty dome which Jesus has provided for his loving and obedient people. God grant that this may be the portion of the writer and all his readers.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### *On the witness and fruits of the Spirit.*

ON this subject I anticipated but little opposition; for though I was aware that Mr. W. had not insisted upon it, as he should have done in his sermon on the danger of being deceived in the all important work of salvation; nor expressed himself with that precision which became a minister of the Lord Jesus in his sermon on regeneration; yet I thought it such a prominent truth of the gospel, so perspicuously revealed in the sacred scriptures, and so familiar to all experimental Christians, that he would

not have had the boldness to deny its reality. In this, however, I have been disappointed.

In my observations upon this subject, I said, that the Christian had a three-fold testimony, that he is a child of God. 1. ‘The *direct* witness of the Spirit, which bears witness with his spirit that he is a child of God. 2. Its *indirect* witness, which is its fruits. 3. His external deportment, called keeping the commandments of God, which perfectly corresponds to the internal dispositions of the heart.’ To the two latter our antagonist does not object; but to the former he raises many objections. After writing near five pages in a fruitless search after what I mean by the *direct* witness of the Spirit, and concluding it a delusive, and of course a dangerous conceit, he finishes his perambulation with these words; “Would to God that I might be enabled effectually to expose and drive it out of the world.” p. 196. From his manner of expressing himself upon this subject, one might conclude that he designed as much as possible *to darken counsel with words without knowledge*. It shall be my endeavour,

1. To explain, as far as I am able, and defend this doctrine.

2. To detect Mr. W.’s erroneous representations of our views concerning it.

3. To confirm the doctrine by the testimony of Mr. W. himself and some Calvinistic authors.

In p. 193 he asks, “What then can be meant by this direct witness of the Spirit? Does it mean regeneration itself?” I answer no; it no more means regeneration itself, than his book means Mr. Williston himself. His book is an evidence to all who read it, and believe in its genuineness, that such a book was written at such a time, by Mr. Seth Williston; and that, from his own confession he was ignorant of the direct witness of the Holy Spirit. But this book is one thing, and the act of writing it another:

the one is the *effect*, and the other the *cause*, and therefore they were so dependent upon each other, that the one could not have existed without the existence and actual operation of the other. Even so, the direct witness of the Spirit is not regeneration itself: although regeneration is effected by the Spirit, and is an evidence that the Spirit has effectually wrought in the heart of the regenerated man; and so inseparably connected are they, and so dependent one upon the other, that regeneration cannot be produced without the existence and operation of the Spirit: and whenever regeneration is effected by the Spirit, he leaves an inward impression, or *direct witness* upon the heart of the believing sinner, that he is now justified; and this is immediately followed by the fruits of the Spirit. The *direct witness* of the Spirit then, is the *hand writing* of God upon the human soul, by which the sinner is assured that all his sins are forgiven him for Christ's sake—agreeably to the tenor of the new covenant, which God makes with his believing people;—‘This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.’ When the laws of God are *written in the heart by the finger of God himself*, must not that person have a *direct evidence*, antecedent to all reasoning that he is ‘an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ.’ ‘And I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people—And I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.’ Heb. viii. 10. 12. The taking *away* our iniquities, and the *evidence* that they *are* taken away, although two distinct things in their nature, yet it is supposed that they are simultaneous; the moment our sins are taken away, by the Holy Spirit applying the merits of Christ, He gives us an *inward evidence* that all our

sins are removed ; and this *evidence* is what we mean by the *direct witness* of the Spirit. Being *born of the Spirit*, that same Spirit becomes our companion, guide, and comforter, directing us continually to Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith ; and also bearing his *sacred testimony* to our hearts, that we *are born of God*.

I know not that I can more intelligibly express our sentiments upon this subject than Mr. Wesley has done in his admirable sermon on the *Witness of the Spirit*. ‘By the testimony of the Spirit, says he, I mean an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God, immediately and directly witnesses to my spirit, that I am a child of God, that *Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me*: that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God’—‘Mean time let it be observed, I do not mean hereby that the Spirit of God testifies this by any outward voice : no, nor always by an inward voice, although he may do this sometimes. Neither do I suppose that he always applies to the heart (though he often may) one or more texts of scripture. But he so works upon the soul by an immediate influence, and by a strong, though inexplicable operation, that the stormy wind, and troubled waves subside, and there is a sweet calm : the heart resting as in the arms of Jesus, and the sinner being clearly satisfied that God is reconciled, that all his iniquities are forgiven, and his sins covered.’ Vol. ii. p. 366.

That this is a scriptural, and one of the most important scriptural doctrines, is susceptible of the most substantial proof. It occurs not once or twice, not obscurely, or incidentally, but frequently, clearly, and with studied design ; as if God himself were determined we should not mistake in a matter of such unspeakable importance to our present and future felicity. So it is said of Abel, the first mar-

tyr for righteousness, ‘He obtained WITNESS that he was righteous, God TESTIFYING of his gifts.’ And of Enoch also, ‘Before his translation he had this TESTIMONY that he pleased God.’ Heb. xi. 4, 5. What other witness and testimony could these have been, than the direct witness of God’s Spirit from heaven, testifying to their spirits that their offerings and works of righteousness, were accepted, and pleasing to God? Unless the testimonies here mentioned were given by an audible voice, which is not likely, they must have been the inward suggestions of the eternal Spirit, witnessing to them that their faith was genuine, their works good, and their conduct righteous before God. Job likewise, although the waves of affliction beat upon him one after another, threatening to overwhelm him in despair, yet he comforted himself from an inward consciousness of the divine approbation; ‘Also now behold my WITNESS is in heaven, and my RECORD on high.’ Chap. xvi. 19. It was doubtless this witness which enabled him so confidently to express himself in Chap. xix. 25. ‘For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand in the latter day on the earth.’ This spirit is promised to all that turn unto the Lord; ‘Turn ye at my reproof: behold I will pour out my spirit unto you.’ Prov. i. 23. But it would be superfluous to quote the numerous passages in which this inward and direct witness of the spirit is declared to have been the privilege of God’s people, even under the darker dispensation of Moses: but we must not pass over the evidence derivable from the New Testament, which unfolds the more exalted privilege of all true believers, on every age of the world. ‘He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not

yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.' ) John vii. 38, 39. To his trembling audience on the day of pentecost, Peter said, ' Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.' Acts ii. 38, 39. This grand promise of the Holy Ghost, of which the apostles speaks, and which had been so recently fulfilled in the hearts of the disciples, was that which Jesus, previous to his crucifixion, had made to his followers ; and stands recorded John xvi. 7—15. ' For if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart I will send him unto you'—' When he, the spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth,' &c. At the time the apostle Peter addressed the assembled multitude, Jesus *was glorified*, the promise of Jesus was now accomplished, which accomplishment was an internal and *direct evidence* to all who received it, that Jesus Christ now lived, and reigned at the right hand of the Majesty on high : of this they were now assured, because the Spirit, according to the promise, John, xvi. 14, 15. had now *taken of the things of Jesus*, and had *given them unto his disciples*. And this identical promise the apostle Peter told them, was made *unto them* who were then listening to the tidings of salvation—and to *their children*—the next generation—and to *all that are afar off*—the whole gentile world, including *all in every nation*—even *as many as the Lord our God shall call* by the gospel in all succeeding ages and generations, even unto the end of the world. It is this *promise* of the *Holy Spirit*, which every believer in Christ enjoys, which is the direct evidence of his sonship.

That this is an accurate interpretation of this

subject, will appear further evident from other passages of sacred scripture. Thus said Paul to some of John's disciples, 'Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?'—'And when he had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.' *Acts xix. 2—6.* 'But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, DWELL in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that DWELLETH in you.' *Rom. viii.* The reader is requested to consult this chapter with particular attention, especially from ver. 1 to 16, where he will see with what vehemence the apostle insisted upon this *direct witness* of the Spirit. Mark the following emphatical words; 'For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth WITNESS with our spirits that we ARE the children of God.' These words need no comment. They speak plain and distinct; and express a sentiment familiar to every child of God. All such know, from joyful experience, what it is to have the Spirit of God *dwell* in them, to bear *witness* to their *adoption* into the family of Jesus, and by which they are enabled to *cry Abba, Father.* The same inestimable truth is expressed in *Gal. iv. 4—6.* 'But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And (note what follows) BECAUSE YE ARE SONS, God hath sent forth the SPIRIT of his Son, into your hearts, crying Abba, Father.' How forcible this language! And how directly in point! Can any experimental Christian fail to understand what is

meant by this *spirit of adoption*? Who will affirm that this doctrine was coined by the Methodists? Is it not expressed in the above texts, in the most plain, explicit, and formal manner, by an inspired apostle? And yet Mr. W. knows not what it means! Ignorance of *spiritual things* is not peculiar to him. ‘The natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot know them, for they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth, (or discerneth) all things; yet he himself is judged (or discerned) of no man.’ I pretend not to say that our antagonist is what the apostle means by a *natural man*, any farther than his own confession of his ignorance of those *spiritual things* which can only be *revealed to us by his Spirit*, and the acknowledged sinfulness of his heart, will justify the application of that term to him. To his own Master he must stand or fall.

This same *witness* is appealed to, Rom. ix. 1. ‘I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me WITNESS (*συμαρτυρούσης*, joint witness) in, (ἢ by or with) the Holy Ghost.’ That is, the Holy Spirit *witnesses* to my *conscience*, that what I am about to say respecting my grief concerning my brethren the Israelites, is a solemn truth, and no lie. And to close the catalogue of inspired writers upon this subject, permit St. John, the beloved disciple, to give his deposition: ‘He that believeth on the Son of God hath the WITNESS in himself.’ Can any man suppose that our *own spirit* would be likely to bear a more infallible testimony to this important fact, that we are *born of God*, than the *eternal Spirit* himself? ‘If we receive the *witness* of man, the *witness* of God is greater.’ And certainly God is able to make an impression of himself, of his own image, upon the souls of his children, and by a direct operation of his Spirit upon the heart, make known the fact, that

we are brought from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son. We do not wish to contend for a word. We call it the *direct* witness of the Spirit, because we believe, that, through whatever *medium* it may be communicated, it comes *direct* from God, and gives a *direct* and *sealing* evidence of our acceptance in the beloved. It is believed that our opponents would have much more reason to contend with us, were we to say it is an *oblique*, *circuitous*, *obscure*, or *indirect* witness ; and yet, if they oppose us for calling it a *direct witness*, they must substitute some such term, to express their ideas in opposition to ours.

Reader, weigh well the above proof *direct* from scripture ; and then say, if we can desire *more direct*, positive, and explicit testimony to any matter of fact. This is the fact—that it is the privilege of all Christians to have the *internal witness of the Spirit* that they *are the children of God*. In support of this fact, the inspired writers testify in the most unambiguous language ; and that in a great variety of places. But Mr. W. prays that he may be “able effectually to expose and drive it out of the world.” He may now try his strength. If he can effectually drive all the external and internal evidences of Christianity out of the world, by proving that its authors have given a false testimony, he will accomplish his wish, and merit the thanks of all infidels, for doing that for them which none of them have yet been able to do for themselves. But we humbly trust his arm is not sufficiently nerved for this herculean work. The eternal Rock on which Christianity stands, will effectually resist all the assaults of its enemies ; and the eternal Spirit, which is the consolation, support, and infallible witness of all true Christians, will rise from the combat of its opposers, and present the truth of his own infallible testimony, so substantial and transcendent, as will

effectually silence all opposition, and make the confused retreat of error the more disastrous and disgraceful.

In respect to the *fruits of the Spirit*, Mr. W. seems willing to allow there may be a reality in them. But this concession is not sufficient of itself to save Christianity from that destruction which will be effected, if he can "effectually expose and drive the direct witness of the Spirit out of the world!" It being manifest, that if the *Tree* upon which the *fruit* grows, be driven, by a Hopkinsian whirlwind, out of the world, the *fruit* cannot long remain. If by the *fruits* of the Spirit, such as *love, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost, patience, meekness, temperance, gentleness, faith and goodness*, be meant true religion in the heart, as Mr. W. is willing to allow, how can these fruits appear, unless the Spirit himself, by whom they are produced, nourished, and perpetuated, be present in the heart? Can the tree live, and bear fruit, when separated from the earth, from whence it derives its nourishment? And can the fruits of the Spirit grow in the heart, unless that heart be united to the Spirit, from whence the heart receives its spiritual nourishment? It is inconceivable, to me at least, how the *fruits* of the Spirit can exist in the heart, unless the *Spirit* be present to produce them.

While the tree is united to its mother earth, from whence it receives its nourishment, we may reasonably expect the fruit in its season. But separate it, the life departs, the leaves wither, and the fruit falleth off. The appearance of fruit, then, is a certain indication that there is vegetable life in the tree. So the appearance of the fruit of the Spirit is an infallible evidence, not only that there is spiritual life in the heart of the man upon whom the fruit is visible, but also a certain evidence that the Spirit himself, from whom the Christian receives his con-

tinual nourishment, is now witnessing, or uniting himself with the spirit of the Christian. The fruit then, of the Spirit, is a witness for the Spirit himself, presenting an indubitable testimony to all who are capable of discerning spiritual things, that the Divine Spirit now dwells in the heart. Although a superficial observer may test the nature and quality of the tree by its fruit only, (if he has been previously acquainted with such fruit,) yet a chymist, wishing to make a more minute investigation, would, by a regular process, separate its component parts, and analyze its primitive elements ; and thus demonstrate, by actual experiment, what are its constituents principles ; and by this means come to a *direct evidence*, independent of its fruits, to what *genera* and *species* the tree belongs. So those who wish to arrive to a thorough knowledge of their own character, may make a critical examination, ascertain the fact, by casting themselves into the alembic of God's truth, suffer themselves to be well refined by the fire of God's spirit, until they come forth bearing the sacred impression of God's image of *righteousness and true holiness*. They need not be satisfied with any superficial marks of the divine approbation ; but they may descend to the bottom of their hearts, guided continually by the light of God's truth, until they can find a direct evidence of the fact, that their hearts are changed, and that they are born from above—that the spirit of adoption now dwells in their hearts : Of this every experimental Christian may have a satisfactory evidence. When this is the case, his soul will be plentifully adorned with the graces of the Holy Spirit ; and he will find himself like a fruitful vine, growing and thriving in the garden of the Lord his God.

Mr. W. thinks it a dangerous error to believe that this direct witness of the spirit should in the order of nature, precede the existence of its fruits. p. 195.

But pray tell us, must not the *cause precede its effects*? And is it not this divine Spirit operating upon the heart, which is the *cause* of the fruits of the spirit with which the soul of the Christian is adorned? How then, in the name of common sense I ask, can these *fruits*, or *effects* of the Spirit exist in the heart, *before* the existence and operation of that spirit which is the *cause* of them? Or is it supposed that the fruits of the spirit can be produced, and perpetuated *without* the presence and direct operation of their *cause*? Or that it is compatible with the nature of things, and the economy of grace, that this Holy Spirit should directly operate upon the heart, bringing pardon and peace, and we remain *unconscious* of it? These questions cannot be answered in the affirmative without involving the most palpable absurdities.

2. Let us attend to Mr. W.'s representation, or rather *misrepresentation* of our views upon this all-important subject. It would seem that he possesses such a determined opposition to us, that, if he cannot oppose us successfully on the ground we occupy, he will fix us upon an imaginary one, with the hope of effecting our conquest. Thus, while racking his invention to find out what we mean by the direct witness of the spirit, he says; "It must then be an unaccountable impression made upon the mind, declaring without words, and without the divine nature imparted, that I am a child of God." p. 194. How candid all this! I take the liberty of affirming that a more palpable error cannot be propagated, than by saying, that we believe the direct witness of the spirit that I am a child of God, can exist where the *divine nature is not imparted*. No, such a blasphemous sentiment never entered our thoughts. Is this thy charity! Thy candour! Thou great lover of my soul? Dost thou think to convert me from my errors, and induce me to em-

brace thy scheme, by uttering such groundless accusations? And shall I be more likely to obtain eternal salvation by embracing a system which would force me to such unkind assertions to defend myself? O thou vindicator of reformed doctrines! Reform thyself, by retracting thy cruel charges against thy neighbour. And never more profess a concern for my salvation, until thou canst furnish better evidence of thine own integrity. Point, Sir, to a clause in my book, or in any other of our approved publications, where such a sentiment is advanced, or frankly acknowledge thy mistake.

Such is the triumph of truth, that its opposers can have no prospect of success against it, without first distorting its features with the artificial tints of error. While permitted to show its innocent face, truth stands with a modest, but fearless countenance. Even its enemies, it would seem, dare not assault it, without first clothing it with a false robe to make it appear odious. But this unfair conduct, only gives the friends of truth an opportunity of taking off the fictitious robe, and of exhibiting it in its own native beauty, so that its attracting charms captivate all its admirers with love and affection. To do this in the present instance, we will, from respect to the reader, present him with written testimony against Mr. W.'s assertion. Notice the following passages. 'But when the wor d(holy) is applied to Christians, it imports that all the powers of soul and body are solemnly dedicated to God. The *internal principle* of holiness which is *implanted* in the heart by the Holy Spirit applying the merits of Christ, by which a thorough renovation is effected, is productive of *external holiness*: a holy walking with God, and a holy upright deportment in every relation of life. When the soul enjoys this *principle of holiness*, and exhibits its correspondent tempers and conduct, there is the *abiding witness* of the

Spirit, which is connected with a *knowledge* of our acceptance in the sight of God.' Errors of Hop. p. 265. This quotation, which I think speaks an unequivocal language, is extracted from the very book our antagonist had before him, when he affirmed that we hold to a direct witness of the spirit which *did not impart the divine nature!* And has he produced a single line from that book to contradict the sentiments here expressed? Not one! 'Nor do we mean to assert that there can be any *real testimony* of the spirit, *without the fruit of the spirit.* We assert on the contrary, that the fruit of the spirit *immediately* springs from this *inward testimony.*' Wesley's sermons, vol. ii. p. 366: If these extracts do not make Mr. Williston ashamed of his erroneous assertions, I hope they will convince him, that he has betrayed a want of Christian kindness, in thus distorting our sentiments upon one of the most delicate, deep, and important points of Christian experience and practice.

But he cannot stop yet. To pour contempt upon us, he seems determined, if it cost him his own reputation. Alluding to us as a body, he says, "They are looking for the spirit *to speak* and bear witness in some way entirely distinct from his sanctifying operations upon the heart"—"are led to look for some other evidence of adoption besides the spirit of adoption: and for some other evidence that they belong to Christ, besides the Spirit of Christ; and a life of conformity to him." p. 203. What shall we say to all this? It is so notoriously false, that I know not how to reply to it. To quote from our writings to disprove such strange assertions would be as needless as to use arguments to prove the existence of a material world, or to reason against a man were he to assert that two and two make only three: since all our writings, our sermons, our self-denial, our cautions to our people, and our insist-

ing that we must be *internally* and *externally* holy, or never enter heaven, all conspire together to contradict such assertions. To finish the climax of his cruel charges against us, he observes, p. 203. "Attention to this subject has led us to discover, (if we mistake not) the cause why our opponents do not talk of false and delusive hopes, as taking place among their own people. It has been remarked by those, who have had great opportunity to hear the Methodist preachers, that they do not preach, as if there were any danger that their converts would be deceived by a false hope." When I read this sentence, I confess I was astonished beyond measure at the effrontery of this Mr. W. I challenge the world to produce a set of preachers, who have been more pointed in their appeals to the consciences of both saints and sinners, and who have more earnestly exhorted them *to examine themselves whether they be in the faith.* Let any man read over Mr. Wesley's Sermons—Fletcher's Checks, especially the last volume—his Appeal—Pauson's and Benson's Sermons—Law's Serious Call to a Holy Life—Baxter's Saints Rest—Travels of True Godliness, and our Discipline; all of which are published by us and widely circulated among our people; and then judge of Mr. W.'s candour and Christian charity. I know not who those remarkers are that had such frequent opportunities of hearing the Methodists; but this I will venture to affirm, without any fear of being contradicted by any person competent to decide, that be they who they may, they have given a wrong testimony. For my part, I have had "great opportunity of hearing the Methodists;" and I have also had considerable opportunity of hearing most other denominations, before my conversion, and since; and I can say, I have never, among any, witnessed so much caution in examining the foundation of our hope, and of testing the genuineness

of our experience in divine things, as among the Methodists. Indeed, it is their peculiar theme to insist upon a *direct*, and *indirect*, an *internal* and *external* evidence of our union with God ; continually enforcing the apostolic declaration, *If any man saith that he knoweth God, and keepeth not his commandments, he is a liar.* I am not at all concerned that the above phillipic of Mr. W. will gain any credit, where we are known, and where candour takes the umpire in the breast. But this does not lessen the turpitude of his offence, or render it entirely useless to contradict his unsupported assertions.

What shall we say to all this ? By what strange infatuation was he led to expose his reputation as an author, and as a Christian minister. Our pity is moved towards Mr. Williston. So far from feeling any animosity or resentment for his numerous accusations, that we tenderly commiserate the unhappiness of the man who is reduced to such a dilemma to defend his scheme, and to oppose his polemical adversaries. He was endeavouring to oppose a truth, which presented such an open and formidable face that he could not withstand the glory of its countenance, nor consistently screen himself from its enlightening rays. What then is to be done ? Why, this chaste offspring of the Most High, must be disfigured, and then we will say, ‘The Methodists have done it. And we will have the honour of chastising them for their rude conduct.’ To the awful tribunal of God, is Mr. W. responsible ; and to that tribunal is he referred for the many erroneous representations he has made of our doctrine — a doctrine so conformable to truth, that a consciousness of his inability to oppose it with success, led him to this ungenerous method, of distorting and mutilating for the unmanly purpose of exposing it to contempt. But I recollect myself. Before that eventful period arrives, I hope repentance

may atone for his faults, the blood of Christ wash them *all* away, and the Holy Spirit bring a *direct witness* to his heart that his *iniquities are forgiven, and his sins covered.*

As an evidence of the confused state of his mind upon this subject, we may observe, that, notwithstanding he has asserted, that we believe in having the direct witness of the Spirit, "without having the divine nature imparted," and in having "some other evidence of our adoption, besides the Spirit of adoption," and "some other evidence that we belong to Christ, besides the *Spirit of Christ*;" I say notwithstanding all this, he has said in p. 201.— "By the *indirect witness* of the Spirit, they mean the *new nature* imparted by the Spirit's influence." Here then, after being traduced as heretics and dangerous enthusiasts, as holding to a *direct witness* of the Spirit *without* the divine nature, we are dubbed with orthodoxy, represented as holding to such an *influence of the Spirit*, (direct I suppose if it come *directly* from God,) as produces the *new nature*, which is the *indirect evidence* of our union with God by faith in Christ. For a man to contradict scripture, and to reason *against* reason, is impious and absurd; but to contradict himself, only shews the want of recollection, or an undue partiality to a favourite hypothesis. That Mr. W. contradicts himself will appear indubitable, if we proceed,

3. To confirm the doctrine for which we contend by Mr. W. himself, and some Calvinistic authors. In the following passage, taken from p. 200 of his book, he fully declares his faith in the very truth, for which we contend, and which he *would* were out of the world; to every word of which we cordially subscribe. "Let it be clearly understood, that we believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the only standard of religious truth, and a sufficient guide for us, so long as we continue

in this world. By this standard are to be tried all doctrines, all feelings, and whatever relates to practice. ‘Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.’ Psal. cxix. 105. The following text we consider as applicable to all who speak to us, whether by an audible voice to the ear, or by a secret whisper, or impression, to the mind: ‘To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.’ Isa. viii. 20. Therefore we make no dependence on any internal witness of the Spirit, which cannot be proved by the *word* to be a *true witness*. That which is contained in the bible is the written witness of the *Spirit*, since holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Here is the standing and unalterable testimony of the Spirit, with respect to the nature and effects of true religion, even that religion which God will approve. But my reading of this testimony of the Spirit, with an unrenewed heart, can give me no evidence that I am a child of God. On the contrary it all stands against me, and testifies that I have no part nor lot in this matter. But when the Spirit condescends to write upon my heart, the same religion,” (Here is what we mean by the direct witness of the Spirit—His *writing upon the heart*; the same religion) “which he has revealed in the scriptures, this may be called his *living witness*.” Did Mr. W. suppose that we believed the *direct witness*, was a *dead witness*? Call it then a *living witness*, because it comes from the *living God*, and brings a *direct* and *living testimony*, that “the same religion,” which consists of *righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost* as that “revealed in the scriptures” is now *written* upon the heart, by the Spirit of the *Living God*. Mr. W. continues: “and it is known by *our spirit*, that is by our rational soul, to be *his witness*, and no delusion, by its agreement with his standing and unalterable testimony, which is given

in the scripture of truth. Religion, as contained in the Bible, is something which is enjoined us, and its nature and effects are described; but religion, when communicated to the heart by the Holy Spirit," "is inward and outward obedience to those injunctions; —it is *feeling* and *action*. It is, in fine, the actual existence of the thing *in life*, which is there only described in *words*." We are thankful for this frank declaration in favour of the grand, scriptural doctrine of *internal* and *external* godliness; and for the distinction between the *direct* and *indirect* witness of the Spirit.

This however he is not willing to grant. "By this it will be seen that we make no distinction between what our theological opponents call the *direct* and *indirect* witness of the Spirit: and we are persuaded that no such distinction ought to be made." What! Has he not made a distinction, by speaking of the Spirit's *writing the religion* of the Bible *upon the heart*? and by calling this *writing a living testimony*, which is known by *our Spirit*? The *fruits* of the Spirit are produced in *our spirit*, where they grow and thrive, while nourished by the Holy Spirit; and therefore, if it is *our spirit* which knows the *living witness* of the Holy Spirit, we must know it to be something distinct from the *fruits of the Spirit*, which are engrafted into our spirit, and are what *we* have called the *indirect witness* of our adoption into the family of Christ.

To *write* is one thing; and what is *written* is another. The act of writing upon the heart of a penitent believer pardon and peace, is the act of God, who, by his Holy Spirit gives the direct testimony that all our sins are forgiven us for Christ's sake: The truth *written* is this pardon itself, with the peace, joy, &c. which accompany it; and we are enabled to read it by our own minds, our rational souls, while thus guided in their enquiry after spir-

itual things, by the eternal Spirit of truth. We grant, that, at times, this direct witness may be obscured by clouds of temptations, and the thick fog of adversity, so that we cannot immediately perceive it: and then, to prevent despair, we must search for the fruits of the Spirit, and examine our conduct, and see if it be in conformity to the morality of the gospel. Finding the existence of these fruits, accompanied by a correspondent conduct, we have reason to conclude that the Spirit himself, the cause of these fruits, must also be present: and by waiting upon the Lord in obedience to his will, the *Sun of righteousness* will so shine forth upon the soul, as to disperse the clouds and darkness, and his sacred beams will directly witness to our souls, that we are now accepted in the beloved. We know, indeed, that it is extremely difficult to communicate, in appropriate language, these deep things of God; but, it is presumed that the above statement will be sufficiently intelligible to all experimental Christians. Their own happy experience will supply the defects of human language. God speaks to the heart—in power and majesty—and his words are full of comfort to the believing soul, while a stranger understands not his voice. His *sheep* however, *hear his voice*, and understand his language.

Moreover, are not the holy scriptures also, in some sense, the fruits of the Spirit; and when the holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, did they not speak under the *direct* influence of that Holy Ghost? For our part, we can have no perception how there can be any *fruits of the Spirit*, unless there be *first* a *direct* operation of the Spirit himself to produce them. It seems no less absurd, than to suppose the world, which is an *effect*, or *fruit* of omnipotent power, could have existed *anterior* to the *direct* exertion of that power; which

is the same as to say an *effect* has an actual existence before the *cause* which produces it, is in actual operation. Error will eventually absuse itself.

That we are not singular in contending for this direct and internal witness of the Spirit, is farther manifest from the following quotations from Calvinistic authors. The first is taken from Mr. W's book, p. 199, which he has borrowed from President Edwards' life. 'The first that I remember that I ever found any thing of that sort of *inward, sweet delight in God and divine things*, that I have lived much in since, was on reading these words, 1 Tim. i. 17. *Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*' As I read these words there came *into my soul*, and was as it were *diffused through it*, a sense of the glory of the divine Being; a new sense, quite different from any thing I ever experienced before.' Now, how did this 'sense of the divine glory,' 'come *into his soul*,' and become 'diffused through it,' unless it were by a *direct operation of the Spirit*? This Spirit first came *into his soul*—this is what we have denominated the *direct witness of the Spirit*: Then, secondly, it was '*diffused through it*', by which he had an '*inward and sweet delight* of God and divine things'—here is the fruit of the Spirit, which we have called the *indirect witness*. And although it did not immediately occur to 'his mind there was any thing saving in all this,' yet he afterwards found a satisfactory evidence of it; for he says it was the same '*sweet delight in God and divine things* that he had lived much in since.' If therefore his experience of spiritual things was genuine, and we doubt not but it was, he then received a *direct evidence* by the Divine Spirit, (and that too, by an application of a particular text of scripture

to his mind, which Mr. W. thinks a dangerous delusion for us to trust in,) that he was *born of God*.

The next evidence I adduce is the learned *Witsius*, who wrote towards the close of the seventeenth century. After having spoken largely upon the nature and spirit of adoption; and having shewn that the promise which Jesus Christ made of the Holy Spirit to his disciples, was not restricted to the apostles and primitive Christians, but is the common privilege of all believers, he observes—  
‘But let us now consider the other effects of the Spirit, which, according to the apostle, consists in this, that he *beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God*. Here we have *two witnesses*, agreeing in *one testimony*. The one is a lower rank, *our spirit*; the other of the higher, the *Spirit of adoption*, who is the Spirit of the Son of God.—By *our Spirit* is understood, the mind and conscience of every believer, whereby he may be conscious of what passes in his own heart. In this sense the apostle said, *What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him*—‘The testimony of this *our spirit* consists in an exact representation of our state by certain marks, and a *full assurance of faith*, which is *followed*’ (here are the *fruits of the Spirit*) ‘by a most quiet tranquillity, and a joy unspeakable.’—He then proceeds to speak of those marks which he calls *infallible*. 1. ‘Good dispositions.’ 2. ‘A holy conformity to our Father and elder Brother.’ 3. ‘A new life.’ 4. ‘A true and sincere love to God.’ 5. ‘A filial reverence and obedience.’ 6. ‘Unfeigned brotherly love.’ These are what we have called the *fruits*, or indirect witness of the spirit. 7. ‘Hence it is, says he, that, while they are sometimes ravished on high by his Spirit, he surrounds them with the beams of his supercelestial light; gives them a view of his face shining with

the brightest love, kisses them with the kisses of his mouth, admits them to the most endearing mutual intercourse of mystical love with himself, and, plentifully shedding abroad his love in their hearts, he gives them to drink of rivers of honey and butter, &c.—‘Then at length they entirely acquiesce, when to the *testimony of their own spirit* is super-added *that of the Spirit of God*’—‘That testimony is given principally in the following manner. First, the Spirit of God makes those holy habits, which, we have said, were the distinguishing marks of the children of God; and which at times are often involved in much darkness, and covered with much rubbish and filth, to shine with clearness in their souls, and, as it were, readily present themselves to the contemplation of the mind when examining itself. And then it excites our spirit, otherwise languid, to the diligent observation of our mind, both transacted in and by it, enlightens the eyes of the understanding with supernatural light, to prevent our being deceived with what is specious rather than solid, or our overlooking those things, on the observation of which our consolation depends.—There is, moreover, a certain INTERNAL INSTINCT, which no human language can explain, IMMEDIATELY ASSURING God’s beloved people of their adoption, no less than if, being carried up to the third heavens, they had heard *audibly* from God’s own mouth: as the apostle formerly heard in the holy mount, *a voice from the excellent glory*. Lastly, seeing no testimony is stronger than that which is proved by facts, the Spirit of God does not leave himself *without witness* in that respect; exciting generous motions (that is, as we have expressed it, producing in the heart by his direct operations the indirect witness of the Spirit) ‘and the sweetest raptures in believers, and delighting them with consolations so ravishing and extatical, and even

exceeding all conceptions, that they cannot consider them in any other light, but as so many' (indirect) 'testimonies of their adoption.' 'Nor is there any reason to apprehend, that the Children of God will, in this case, suffer themselves to be imposed upon, or admit for a *testimony of the Holy Spirit*, what is a lie and mere illusion of the deceiving spirit.' I beseech the reader to consider well the following words, which are as explicit in favour of what we call the *direct witness* of the Spirit, as words can be: we only object to the words, 'Irresistible power.' 'For in this *voice of the Spirit of God*, there is so much clearness, so much *majesty*, and so much *efficacy* whereby it *penetrates*, with an irresistible power, into the bottom and *inmost recesses of the heart*, that they who have been accustomed to that voice, can easily distinguish it from all others. The *world*, certainly, *cannot receive this spirit, seeth him not, neither knoweth him*; but *Christ's sheep know the voice of their Shepherd*. And when it sounds, not so much in their ears as in their hearts, they joyfully exclaim, *This is the voice of my beloved, behold! he cometh!*' Witsius on the Covenants, vol. iii. p. 203—212.

I know not how human language can more forcibly express the necessity, utility, and *certainty* of the witness of God's spirit *directly* witnessing to the heart of every believer that he is a child of God, than the above extracts from this *pious reformer*. And Witsius was no canting enthusiast; but a Calvinistic author of great merit, according to the acknowledgment of, I believe, most ministers of that order: and although we greatly differ from him, respecting unconditional election, &c. yet I think his work worthy of being read, especially those parts which relate to Christian experience and practice. We could hope that he has treated his Ar-

minian opponents with greater liberality than Mr. W. has the Methodists.

Another evidence in favour of the truth which we consider so unspeakably precious, is taken from the confession of faith of the Presbyterian Church, ch. 18. p. p. 85, 86. ‘The *infallible assurance of faith* is founded upon the divine truth of the promise of salvation, the *inward evidence* of those graces unto which these promises are made; the *testimony of the spirit of adoption*, witnessing *with our spirit*, that we are the children of God; which spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption.’ Here also we have a positive and explicit testimony in favour of this grand scriptural doctrine; and not the testimony of an individual, but of the whole body of Presbyterians who acknowledge that confession of faith as their standard. And it should be remarked, that in this quotation, the *graces* of the spirit which *we* have called its *fruits* and its *indirect witness*, are clearly distinguished, both from *our own spirit*, and from the *Spirit of God*; which last is what *we* have called the *direct witness* of the spirit, but which the compilers of this confession have denominated the *testimony* of the spirit of adoption; saying that it is this *divine Spirit* which *witnesseth with our spirit*, that we are the children of God. But Mr. W. is “persuaded that no such distinction should be made;” and yet, strange to tell, he has not only made it himself, but sets himself up for the vindicator of the doctrines of the Reformers, who, with much caution and precision, have made the very distinction for which we have contended. And it is an admirable proof of the perspicuity with which this doctrine is revealed in the holy scriptures, and of its conformity to the experience of true Christians, to find so many different writers, and those too, who disagreed in some very important points as much.

as *Wesley* and *Witsius*, the *Methodists* and *Presbyterians*, should nevertheless exhibit such coincidence of sentiment on the *witness* and *fruits* of the holy Spirit. Let any man compare the preceding quotations from Edwards, Witsius, and the Presbyterian Confession of Faith, with what Wesley, Fletcher and the Methodists have written upon this subject, and he must be convinced that the discrepancy is merely verbal; and that they have all appealed to the same texts of scripture for proof of their doctrine. If therefore, Mr. W.'s intellectual arm be sufficiently strong to *drive* the *bible*, Wesley and others, Witsius, Edwards and the Presbyterian Confession of Faith, *out of the world*, he may then drive out the witness of the Spirit also. We have no fears, however, for the safety of this truth. Supported as it is by the infallible word of the living God, it raises its fearless head, bidding defiance to the puny attacks of its assailants, and calmly reclining itself in the bosom of Him who hath said; 'But the Comforter which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.' John xiv. 26. May God seal this saving truth upon the consciences of all our readers.

Of all the doctrines of the gospel, this ought to be pressed upon mankind with the utmost earnestness. This, as well as human depravity, conviction for sin, repentance, the exercise of faith, justification and sanctification, must be tested by actual experiment. If this testimony be, as it unquestionably is, a direct and infallible witness to the heart, by which the believing Christian may know that he is an *heir of God, and a joint heir with Jesus Christ*, then every one ought to be extremely cautious not to rest satisfied until he attain to an experimental knowledge of this witness. Let no man, therefore,

deceive himself with a *false hope*. The experienced Christian does not *hope* that he is converted or born of the spirit : of this he has the *direct* and *indirect* witness of the spirit ; and their joint testimony mutually assist and strengthen each other, always occupying the heart at one and the same time, the one being the cause, and the other the effect ; and are always productive of a uniform obedience to the commandments of God.

*Hope* is not occupied about *present*, but *future* objects. The Christian indeed, has a hope full of immortality, *like an anchor to the soul, both sure and stedfast*; *entering into that within the veil, whither Jesus the forerunner hath for us entered*: but this *hope*, grounded upon the present knowledge of his acceptance in the beloved, looks beyond ‘the bounds of time and space’ to the celestial hill of God, where the saints reign in perrenial happiness. When a sinner is convicted of sin, indulges a godly sorrow for it, resolving by the grace of God to forsake it, he may then *hope* for forgiveness : Having obtained forgiveness for the sake of Jesus Christ, received the *witness* of his adoption into the family of Christ, if he continues to walk in the light as God is in the light, he may scripturally and reasonably *hope* for perfect sanctification ; and while thus persevering under the influence of that Spirit which bears witness with his spirit that he is a child of God, he has a well-grounded hope that he shall eventually attain to everlasting felicity. This is the ‘*Hope which maketh not ashamed*; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us,’ Rom. v. 5. And this is the *hope* ‘by which we are saved’ from *despair* through every stage of our spiritual pilgrimage. Let it be remarked, that none can have any good reason to believe he has attained to this *witness of the Spirit*, unless he has previously had his

heart deeply penetrated on account of his sinfulness, by which he has been brought to that humbling view of himself, which has extorted the confession, *Lord! I am vile; what shall I answer?* Under this penetrating sense of his native vileness, and the sinfulness of his life, he must be brought to the foot of the cross, and like a condemned criminal beg for pardon and salvation. It is not enough merely to be sensible of our spiritual disease, to acknowledge our guilt, and to effect an external reformation, but we must have an application of the healing efficacy of Jesus' blood, be delivered from our guilt, and have a thorough internal reformation effected by the Holy Ghost. And when this gracious work is effected in the heart, it is accompanied with the *direct* and *indirect* witness of the spirit; and is followed by a life of conformity to the precepts of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let all, therefore, into whose hands this book may fall, conscientiously and carefully examine themselves upon this interesting subject. Let them not delude themselves into a belief that they shall be eternally saved, merely because they have had some sorrow for sin, have openly professed a belief in the doctrine of the Gospel, and now *hope*, merely, that they are justified. If you have the religion of the heart, such as the bible requires of you, you do not *hope* you have it. No; of this you have, especially when the brightness of God's reconciled countenance shines upon your soul, no doubt. And if at any time you are in *heaviness through manifold temptations*, still, if you hold fast *faith and a good conscience*, earnestly pressing forward in the way of self-denial, *The sun of righteousness will rise upon* your soul with such brightness, as to dissipate the intellectual clouds from your mind, and cause you to shout, from a feeling sense of his pardoning love, the wonders of redeeming grace. Do not

then deceive yourself with an imaginary witness of your acceptance with God, before you have groaned under a deep and piercing sense of your guilty and lost estate by nature and practice ; and have cast your burdened soul upon the Lord Jesus as your only Saviour. But even then, if the internal witness you thought you had received, does not immediately produce the fruits of the Spirit ; such as *love* to God and your neighbour ; *joy* in the Holy Ghost ; *patience* in the midst of crosses and disappointments ; *meekness* of submission to God's government ; *gentleness* of deportment towards all men ; *humility* amidst reproaches, poverty and riches ; *goodness* in answering the end of your first and second creation ; *faith* or *fidelity* in the performance of every civil, religious, and moral duty ; and *temperance* in the government of all the appetites and passions of the body and soul ;—I say, If these do not immediately follow your professed renovation, you have reason to suspect that your experience was delusive. If a man only examine by *one* of the witnesses, he is ever liable to be deceived : but if he examine by the *three*, the *internal witness* of the Spirit, its *fruits*, and a life of *piety to God*, and *benevolence to man*, (if this latter be not rather included or implied in the second witness,) and if he can correctly ascertain the fact, so as to conclude he has them *all*, I cannot see how such a man can easily be deceived. A man, indeed, who only *hopes* himself a Christian, is not only continually liable to deception, but he can never determine whether he is deceived or no ; because while a man only hopes for a thing, his mind is suspended in more or less uncertainty ; as it supposes the absence of the thing for which he hopes. There is, therefore, no other correct method to avoid deception, than by arriving to a scriptural certainty that we are in *the good and right way*. Let all men then, who value the eternal salvation of their immortal souls, test their char-

acter by the three infallible witnesses we have named, viz. the *direct* and *indirect witness* of the Spirit, and the external conformity of the conduct to the commandments of God. These three must go together, and bear their joint testimony to the same fact, viz. that we are the children of God, and in the way to the kingdom of glory. If then you find yourself destitute of either, search,—pray,—wrestle in earnest prayer until the Lord shine upon your soul, and you are enabled to say with delight, *This is my beloved, and this is my friend.*

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## CHAPTER VII.

### *On Christian Benevolence.*

ON what Mr. Williston has written concerning *disinterested* benevolence, we do not find much to object, if what he has said in p. 207 may be considered a just explanation of what the Hopkinsians mean by that phrase ; namely, “ When it is used in opposition to selfishness it is evident that it cannot mean the same as *no interest*, but rather as pointing to another sort of interest, totally different from the interest sought by a selfish being :” because we always believed that when the heart of a sinner is changed by the grace of God, he seeks a “ totally different interest” from what he did while under the power of the carnal mind ; and also because Mr. W. admits in the above quotation, that the Christian may seek his own interest, or his own spiritual happiness ; and therefore need not be *disinterested*, according to the literal acceptation of that word. Nevertheless, we think the phrase is very unhappily chosen, because it conveys an idea totally different from the sentiment expressed in the

above quotation ; and therefore I am not convicted that my objections to his manner of expressing himself “are a mere play upon words” as he intimates they are : for, if it be admitted that a Christian may have a suitable regard to his own happiness in all he does, then it is conceded that *disinterested benevolence* is ‘ something to which man is a total stranger.’ Why then contend for this theoretical phantom? How much safer to adopt the scripture phraseology upon this subject, which says, true religion consists in *Loving God with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves* ; than to run into the metaphysical refinements of *abstract love, disinterested benevolence, &c.* These terms, even as Mr. W. himself has explained his meaning, convey no determinate and intelligible idea ; for he admits that it is perfectly consistent to have respect to our own present and eternal interest ; (and he could not do otherwise without flying directly in the face of God’s word;) and that according to our Lord’s declaration, our love to ourselves should be the standard of love to our neighbour. Why then perplex the minds of men with a phraseology perfectly unintelligible ? and plead for that which cannot exist ? Philosophers had long turned the moral world upside down, (and some totally annihilating the material world,) with their hypothetical speculations upon the agreement and disagreement of floating ideas, as the foundation of human knowledge—until a *Beattie* and a *Reid* arose, and presented us with substantial realities. And shall the Christian world be deluged with the phantasms of *abstract beauty, love to being in general, and disinterested benevolence*, to the destruction of that substantial love of God and our neighbour, and that regard to our own welfare which is compatible with both ?

If Mr. W. had carefully attended to my remarks, he might have saved himself much of what he has

written in vindication of his views, upon this subject. In page 269 of the Errors, &c. it was observed, ‘According to your representation, the dividing line between them, (the regenerate and unregenerate) is, the one has a supreme regard to self, and the other a supreme regard to God.’ This, said I, may be accurate enough: but the way in which you express yourself about *disinterested benevolence*, has a tendency to perplex the mind.’ By this it will be perceived that we object *principally*, though not *wholly*; to the *manner* in which they express themselves upon this subject: and if Mr. W. in the above words quoted from his vindication, and what he has said p. 209, that I am “to value my neighbour’s interest and happiness, *as much as my own*,” be a correct statement of his views of Christian benevolence, why has he written so much against our views of this divine principle? which were thus expressed; ‘That selfish principle which prompts an individual to seek his own happiness *only*, without any regard to the happiness of his fellow-creatures, to be sure, is repugnant to the spirit of Christianity. The truly philanthropic soul actuated by the love of God and man, will rejoice in the temporal and spiritual prosperity of others as well as his own.’ Errors, &c. p. 272. Certainly it ought to be the object of all men, and especially of polemical writers, to ascertain, if possible, precisely wherein they agree, and not strive merely to obtain victory by the sorceries of argument. We know, and we never thought of denying it, that unregenerate men are selfish; that however apparently benevolent their disposition, their motives, while uninfluenced by the Spirit of grace, are sinfully selfish: and we are fully convinced, that whenever a radical change is effected by the energies of the eternal Spirit, that supreme selfishness is destroyed, being succeeded by a spirit of true Christian benevolence,

which is characterized by love to God and man; and which excites the Christian to *deny himself* of every desire, every enjoyment, and of every practice, which are incompatible with the glory of God, and with the temporal and spiritual welfare of his neighbour. If therefore our antagonists deem it their duty to oppose us, let them lay their objections against this view of the subject; and not represent us as teaching a doctrine which permits sinners to indulge their native selfishness, however averse it may be to the sacred honour of God, and the present and eternal welfare of their neighbour. Among all the earnest exhortations to *self-denial*, I have seen none so close, so pointed, so perspicuous and scriptural, as are to be found in the writings of those justly honoured, and eminently useful servants of God, Messrs. John Wesley and John Fletcher.

But though we agree, in the main, with Mr. W. as he has explained himself in the places referred to, yet we cannot subscribe to *all* he has advanced on this subject; for we still perceive, in some places, a disposition to vindicate the idea of *abstract* love, that is, totally abstracted from any regard to our own happiness: and to this speculative notion of disinterested love, I think the objections mentioned in my publication, all remain unobviated by our opponent. That he manifests a disposition to defend this notion, which we have said is purely speculative, (for we venture to affirm that no man ever proved its truth from experience, and it is certainly not contained in the word of God,) appears from what he has written p. 214. where, notwithstanding he had admitted that Christians who seek the glory of God and the welfare of their neighbour, also seek their own happiness, he observes; "Therefore, if they were to loose their hope of being personally interested in the good of the universe, and yet re-

tain their disinterested love, they would still seek and desire this great good, and would rejoice in the certainty that it was secured in the perfect government of Jehovah." This is only expressing with great obscurity, what Dr. Hopkins has expressed with great clearness, namely, that a sinner must be *willing to be damned in order to be saved.* It ought to be remarked that my objections to this strange notion, of being willing to go to hell for the benefit of the universe, are all left unnoticed by Mr. W. and he expresses himself in this manner with as much confidence, as if nothing could be said against it.

The argument, when stript of its ambiguous garb, and when dissected, will be found to contain many absurdities. It supposes, and asserts, that a man who has *lost all hope of his own personal salvation*, may nevertheless possess disinterested benevolence: or in other words, he may possess what Mr. W. considers one of the most infallible evidences that he is a holy Christian, and yet have no hope of his own salvation: or to make it plainer still, he may be a genuine follower of Christ, have an evidence that he has been born of the Spirit, by which, according to our opponent, he is sure that he shall be eternally saved, and yet have no hope of his personal interest in Christ—be sure that he is in the road to heaven, and yet think himself a candidate for hell fire! How absurd. How can a man who is conscious of his having an interest in Christ, because he possesses disinterested benevolence, at the same time have no hope of his personal salvation? Or is it supposed that a man can be so holy as to be perfectly satisfied with the *government of Jehovah*, fully resigned to all his dispensations, and yet be so unconscious and insensible of it, as to conclude himself a reprobate, an enemy to God, and opposed to the divine government? Can we conceive it possible that a

Christian can be conscious of such a principle of benevolence operating in his heart, as prompts him to seek after, and rejoice in the greatest good of the universe, and yet be so insensible of the love of God, which, to produce such a principle, must be in his heart, and so uncertain of his personal interest in Christ, as to “loose all hope of having a personal interest” in him? If any man can perceive how these things can be, he may then perceive the consistency of a truly benevolent Christian’s being willing to be separated from God, the supreme object of his affections, forever. How incredible! that a Christian who loves God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself, should at the *same time* be willing to be eternally separated from the God he loves, and from his neighbour with whom he delights to dwell: That is, in plain words, he must be willing to have his *love* to God turned into *hatred*, and his Christian *affection* for his neighbours exchanged for *variance* and *strife*—be willing to become an enemy to God and his brethren forever. Is this the effect of disinterested benevolence? If it is, may the good Lord deliver us all from it—lest, instead of being willing to go to heaven in *obedience* to God’s will, we all turn *enemies* to him, and become willing to go to hell, and be at eternal enmity to ‘God and all good.’ Notwithstanding, therefore, all Mr. W. has said to the contrary in his explanatory note, it appears to us utterly impossible that such a thing can be, that a man who loves God supremely, and who rejoices in the manifestation of his glory, should be willing that he himself should become an object of divine hatred to all eternity.

That when a sinner is awakened to a deep sense of his actual guilt and native vileness, he *sees* the *justice* of his condemnation; and that, if he were actually condemned eternally, he must, from a view

of the righteousness of God's law, however unwillingly, acknowledge the *justice* of the decision, is freely admitted : but to say that after he is pardoned, his nature renewed, the love of God spread abroad in his heart, and he reconciled and united to God by faith in Jesus Christ, that he should at the same time be willing to be again condemned, become separated from, and unreconciled to God to all eternity, appears to us one of the most monstrous absurdities imaginable. To refute it by argument, is as impossible as it is needless. But when men make such strange assertions, and advance such incredible paradoxies, they must be met, and their absurdity exposed in the best way we can. If a man were to assert that we must be willing absolutely to love God, and absolutely to hate him at the same time, how shall we refute the assertion by argument, or disprove it from scripture ? Absurdity is so prominent upon the very front of it, that no reasoning can make it more apparent, and no positive testimony, any more than what every man finds in his own breast, need be adduced to disprove it : But the above assertion of Mr. W. when stript of its ambiguous clothing, presents, if not the very same, yet an absurdity equally glaring. Only let the Sun of truth dart his enlightening rays upon it, and its inconsistency will appear in all its heightened colours.

But because we oppose this Hopkinsian phantom of disinterested benevolence, Mr. W. insinuates that we " approve of those religious experiences which are really bottomed on selfishness," p. 136. and hence he strives to impress the public with a belief that we ape the ancient Jewish pharisees, who ' trusted in themselves that they were righteous,' ibid. How extremely solicitous is our ingenuous antagonist to dress us up in a borrowed robe, that he may have an opportunity of shewing

his skill in exposing our nakedness with the tip of his pen. He is perfectly welcome to tear this antique robe to pieces ; for he will not then have touched our robe of righteousness given us from above, which effectually defends us from the lacerating strokes of his controversial rod.

Let us, however, see from whence he derived the information that we must be classed with the pharisees. Why "In their book of doctrines it is said, 'There is a necessity of knowing his love, who first loved us, without which we cannot love him again.' p. 135. But does it necessarily follow because we say we love God because he first loved us, that our religious experience is "bottomed on selfishness"? Is then the *love of God*, which we make the *foundation* of our love to Him, *selfishness*? Can any better "bottom" or foundation of our love be found, than the *love of God*? Or does Mr. W. suppose that his disinterested benevolence is better, or a more permanent foundation than that divine Love, which moved God the Father to give his Son a ransom for us all? Why not then bring this objection against St. John, because he said, *God is love. We love him because he first loved us*? Do they object to us for making the Love of God to us, a *reason*, or motive why we should love him in return? But do not the inspired writers all along insist upon the Love of God as a motive to induce us to love Him? *God so loved the world—that whosoever believeth on him should have everlasting life. The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance. The long-suffering of God is salvation.* What more commanding or worthy motive can be presented to the human mind to induce its love, than the infinite love of God?

We would, moreover, ask our polemical adversaries, Whether they think it would have been possible for any man to love God, unless He had first

loved us? Or do they suppose *we* must *first* love *God before* we can know he has loved us? He is loving to every man. This love existed in Him from eternity: and his love towards the human family changeth not. If therefore we are ever brought to know him at all, must we not know that He loved us before we loved Him? If it be a *truth*, as it certainly is, that God's love, which eternally existed in Him, demonstrated itself in the gift of Jesus Christ, and if we are ever brought to *know* the *truth* as it is *in Jesus*, must we not also know that God loved us before we loved Him? Even were we to allow that we must love God on account of his own perfections, or, as it is commonly expressed, 'For what he is in and of himself,' it does not alter the case: for what is he in and of himself? Is he not love? And did he not of his own pure motion, moved thereto without any cause extraneous from himself, execute the glorious scheme of Redemption and Salvation, by which is demonstrated his infinite love to the human family? If then we love him on account of his own glorious perfections, as those perfections led him to love us from eternity, we love him because he first loved us. How can it be otherwise? If God had not first loved us, so as to give his Son to die for us, how could we ever have loved him? Could *we* have atoned for our *own sins*? have regenerated *ourselves*? and have shed abroad his love in our own hearts, *without* the gift of Christ, and independently of the agency of the Holy Ghost? Or do all these unspeakable blessings come to us *after* we love God? Were we to teach such a doctrine as this, our opponents in this controversy might very justly accuse us with reiterating the heresy of the Pharisees.

When the Lord reveals himself to us as penitent sinners, he reveals himself as a God of love, as having given himself for us; and when that revelation of

himself is made to our souls by the Holy Spirit, we perceive that he hath *so* loved us as to give his only begotten Son to be a propitiation for our sins, that we *might be made the righteousness of God in him*; and this love, thus manifesting itself to us, is the cause or reason of our love to God, without which we certainly never could have loved him. We do not indeed, love him merely because we are to be made happy by him; although it is impossible for us to separate the expectation of our own individual happiness, (I mean such a kind of happiness as Christianity imparts now, and promises hereafter,) from our supreme love to God; because it is impossible for us to love God, and at the same time be miserable: Holiness and happiness are inseparably connected together. Whenever the superlative excellency of the divine perfections are exhibited to the believing mind, that mind perceives an Object every way calculated, on account of its own excellency, to command the affection and admiration of all intelligent creatures: but these intelligent creatures perceive at the same time, that this supremely excellent Being first loved them, and that to love him is to be happy. They therefore love him because he first loved them; and also love him under an expectation of being happy in the enjoyment of him forever: unless they absurdly suppose that He will make those, who love him with all their heart, eternally miserable. And what an erroneous view would this be of his just and merciful character?

So also in respect to the second table of the law: — Those who love their neighbour as themselves, will feel disposed to do him all the good in their power, whether they receive any reward from him or not: but if their judgment is accurately informed they must know that while they continue to love their neighbour, this love springing from the love of God, that their own happiness is perfectly secure.

They cannot, therefore, Love, either God or man, or both together, under an expectation of being miserable ; and neither are they required to feel that disinterested love which would make them willing to be miserable while thus filled with divine love ; unless we suppose them to be willing to be what God is not willing they should be, that is, to be opposed to God's will out of love to him !

This appears to us a scriptural and rational representation of this subject. And I believe it will be extremely difficult to perceive how it can be fairly inferred that Christians, while acting under the influence of such a principle, can be considered as "bottoming their religious experience upon selfishness." The foundation is the love of God : the superstructure is the love of our neighbour : and the Christian himself while occupying this sacred edifice, feels perfectly secure let the wind blow ever so furiously, or the rain beat ever so vehemently : and as long as he possesses a proper regard for his own happiness, he will not exchange this divine building, for the imaginary shelter of disinterested benevolence. May we all abide under its gilded roof, until we are removed to that *City which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God!*

## CHAPTER VIII.

*Remarks on the Gospel Ministry.*

**O**N this subject we have not much to say in reply to Mr. Williston's observations on Satan's transformation, nor to his reiterated insinuation that we are Satan's ministers ; because such invidious comparisons and allusions as go to fix this black mark exclusively upon any body of professed Christian ministers, are not the best calculated to do good.

However desirable it might be to vindicate ourselves from the contemptuous epithets of those who think themselves authorized to impugn our motives, and to traduce our practice and character, this is a consideration of minor importance, when put in competition with the immaculate character of the God we worship. Mr. W. says, somewhat sarcastically, when speaking of our using the weapon of *reason* in defending what we consider the truth, "Now they display great zeal for the honour of God." Far from thinking ourselves degraded by this remark, we consider it no small honour, unworthy as we are, to exemplify a suitable zeal in vindicating the sacred honour of that God, whose impartial goodness has led him to do so much for us. 'If these should hold their peace,' said Christ, 'the very stones would cry out.' And if we, who are so much indebted to boundless mercy for all the good we have, should hold our peace, while others are representing our God like a merciless Moloch, tormenting thousands in hell fire for ever, for having fulfilled his good pleasure, would not the stony hearts of infidels cry out against us, and echo the

sound of their ancestors, who traduced Christianity as a system of cruelty?

St. Paul said, *For whether we be beside ourselves it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.* And if we appear to be *beside ourselves*, while carried along in the flowing current of rational argument, in repelling the unreasonable charges of our opponents against our God, and while attempting to vindicate his glorious majesty from, what we consider, their unscriptural imputations, it is, we humbly trust, from no ebullition of intemperate *zeal*, against the persons of our antagonists; but from a *sober* concern for immortal souls, which, we fear, will be ruined by the principles we oppose; and, however mistaken we may be, from a sincere desire to present the Father of our spirits in the amiable character in which He appears, encircled with the resplendent rays of untarnished justice, infinite wisdom and power, universal love and goodness. So far from feeling convicted for displaying too much zeal in this sacred cause, we blush to think it has not been more proportionate to the tremendous importance of the cause itself.

Let then the consideration of our own insignificant characters, give place to Him who has manifested, and still demonstrates so much love to us. In vindication of his adored Majesty, we would, were we possessed of the rare talent, exhaust all the powers of eloquence. We would not only ascend the lofty mountain of divine revelation, and support His aspersed character by the flowing eloquence of the seraphic Isaiah, the mournful and pathetic numbers of Jeremiah, the pious and devout aspirations of David and his poetical associates, the divinely simple and dignified sentences of Him *who spoke as never man spake*, the thundering denunciations of Peter, the sententious aphorisms, and persuasive words of the beloved disciple John,

and the acute, the penetrating, and the manly arguments of Paul—I say, we would not only shelter ourselves under the wing of these inspired prophets and apostles, while they lend us of their plumage to decorate the character of our God—but we would also range through the spacious field of reason, and gather all the blooming flowers of rational argument, laying them under contribution for the support of so sacred a cause. But alas ! Our limited powers circumscribe us. Were we able to travel the whole circle of science, guided continually by those infallible data which limit our researches, and employ all the treasures of human eloquence in evolving and illustrating the attributes of our God, we could not present so fair and so lovely a portrait as is contained in this one sentence—  
**GOD IS LOVE.** O John ! What did thy soul feel when thou didst utter that divine sentence ? Were not all thy powers absorbed in the contemplation of Him, of whom thou didst say, ‘Herein is love, not that we loved him ; but that he loved us, and gave his Son to die for us’?

While we think ourselves authorized to employ every lawful weapon in defence of *him who is love*, and to refute every principle which strikes at the root of that essential property of his nature, we wish our readers to distinguish between the *men* whose system we oppose, and their *arguments*. Although, from a conviction of the erroneousness of their system, we feel excited by the influence of truth to show it no mercy, we would in the mean time, show all due respect to its advocates. If at any time, from a fond attachment to their favourite theory, they suffer their judgments to be biased against the light of scriptural and rational evidence, we hope that time, and mature deliberation, may rectify their mistakes. This done, they will gladly

follow the pure current of gospel truth, and unite with us, in *ascribing righteousness to our Maker.*

To prevent, however, any one from concluding that instead of unfolding the character of God as it is, we have been influenced by the subtlety of Satan, to represent it in an erroneous point of light, we shall proceed to make a few remarks upon a subject, which, from the manner in which it must be handled, is peculiarly disagreeable; because, it is impossible to meet the observations of our antagonist, without interweaving remarks which must have a personal bearing, either upon ourselves, or upon our opponents.

When Mr. W. published his sermons, he published one on Satan's transforming himself into an angel of light, in which, it is very manifest, he designed to represent the Methodist ministry as the ministry of Satan. While animadverting upon this sermon, I endeavoured to vindicate our ministry from the degrading charge; and also to show, that if promulgating *erroneous doctrines* were any proof of Satan's ministry, then Mr. W. and all who propagated the same sentiments, (I mean those by which his system is distinguished from others,) and were pursuing similar means against their antagonists, furnished substantial proof: at the same time I was careful to advertise the reader, that I did not design those remarks to apply to *all* ministers of that order, nor to insinuate that my antagonist was a wicked minister of Satan. See p. 263 of my book.

Although of the same opinion yet, that the *distinguishing* traits of Hopkinsianism are perfectly coincident to the suggestions of Satan, perfectly congenial to the depraved hearts of sinners, and a most effectual engine to promote the kingdom of darkness, yet I regret that I took the least notice of that particular sermon—not indeed because I am conscious of having written any thing too severe against my op-

ponent, nor too flattering of the Methodist ministry—but 1. Because the erroneousness of his peculiar tenets had been sufficiently exposed: 2. Because I think such invidious remarks as he had made were too contemptible to merit any reply: and 3. Because we have no apprehension that our ministry will suffer any diminution of its character, where we are known, by such degrading insinuations. Therefore, I think it would have been more prudent to have submitted in silence, rather than to have descended to repel such ungenerous attempts to pour contempt upon us. We are public characters; and therefore, after presenting to the public our doctrines, and submitting them to its candid inspection, if we cannot evince the *sincerity* of our profession, and the *purity* of our motives by our conduct, we certainly cannot maintain our ground by argumentation. And if such calumnious attempts to class us under the *Prince of darkness* will upset us, the sooner we are prostrated the better. And were the most elaborate and eloquent speeches employed in our vindication, yet if our doctrines were proved erroneous, and our conduct justly reprehensible, we could have no scriptural claim to the character of Christian ministers.

Neither would any farther remarks be now made upon this exclusive claim made by our opponent, were it not for the purpose of correcting some mistakes which have a bearing upon our views of a gospel ministry, and of removing some wrong impressions which, otherwise, may be made by Mr. W.'s method of defence.

"As to the sarcastic remarks, says he, which are contained in this, and indeed in all the letters, I have nothing to do with them." p. 179. It is acknowledged that there are some *sarcastic remarks* in the letters, and particularly in the one under consideration; and I feel myself perfectly justified in

the use of them. What else can be done with palpable absurdities, than to hold them up as just objects of ridicule? And in retorting a charge, made with so much seriousness, that we are ministers of Satan, must the salt of irony be considered as the gall of bitterness? If the weapon he designed to chastise his neighbour with, be wrested from him, and the cutting strokes returned upon the back of his own absurd system, are we criminal for following the example of a deeply pious man in his mode of polemical discussion? And so far as the absurdities of his doctrines, the many palpable contradictions which present themselves upon the very face of them, are concerned, how shall they be exposed? To refute them by argument is impossible. If a man were to affirm that God *hates* sin, and that it is *according* to his *pleasure*, because his *own production*, though it *originates* from the *heart* of man; how are you to reason against such *absurd* propositions? To let them pass unnoticed would betray a want of zeal in the cause of truth. And to disprove every absurdity by direct scripture testimony, is not always practicable: for if a man were to assert that God originally decreed the everlasting destruction of a precise number of the human family, all of which must inevitably be damned; and then assert that those identical reprobates were put into a salvable state, so that they may be saved if they will, because Christ died for them without any intention of saving them; how will you disprove his contradictory assertions by positive scripture testimony, or refute them by rational argument? And the reason is obvious enough. The assertions are so manifestly absurd, and so completely incompatible with each other, that they need only to be mentioned to render them incredible.

But our pious antagonist writes with much apparent candour, and Christian gravity, professing a great love for my soul, and a great concern for my personal salvation, and the salvation of the Methodist people. How far such apparent candour, and such professions of love for another are consistent with the *manner* in which he has stated our doctrines, and which has been noticed in the preceeding pages, the reader must determine. But, says he, "I have no personal quarrel with my antagonist. p. 179. A good reason for it. His antagonist has done him no personal injustice, neither has he brought any false accusations against his system. This, however, he assigns as a reason why he has *nothing to do with my sarcasms*, that is, I suppose he will not retaliate with similar weapons. But we think a better reason may be assigned.

The fact is, that in the true doctrines of the gospel, there is nothing ridiculous; so that a man must be abandoned indeed, like the infidel philosopher, *Voltaire*, to employ sarcasm against these sublime truths. Where is the man that will have the effrontery to pour forth irony or sarcasm, upon the doctrine of Human depravity: The universal atonement of Christ: The necessity of Justification by faith: Repentance, holiness, and Christian obedience to the end of life: The justice, wisdom, power, goodness, and holiness of God, which shine, when the mists of error are cleared away, with transcendent beauty and excellence in the character of Him, who is worshiped by those who embrace the *truth as it is in Jesus?*

We do not find that the *false* Prophets ever employed ridicule or sarcasm against the *true* God, or against the *true* Prophets of Israel: but we find the latter frequently exposing the absurdities of the *false* gods, and the nonsensical reveries of the *false* prophets, by their innocent sallies of irony.

'Take a few instances of it. 'Ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more. Go, and cry unto the gods ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.' Judges x. 14. 'And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.' 1 Kings xviii.

27. How cutting this keen satire upon these prophets of Baal, who were contesting the point with *Elijah* the true Prophet of Israel respecting the true God. So Job also, while refuting the inconclusive reasoning of his mistaken friends, uttered the following severe irony—'No doubt ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you.' Job xii. 2. And did not Jesus Christ use a similar figure of speech when he gently reproved his disciples on account of their inattention to the tremendous sufferings he was preparing to meet? 'Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.' Matt. xxvi.

45. That he did not design they should *sleep on* is manifest from the next verse where it is said, 'Rise, let us be going.' 'This weapon,' says Dr. Reid, 'when properly applied, cuts with as keen an edge as argument. Nature has furnished us with the first to expose absurdity; as with the last to refute error. Both are well fitted for their several offices, and are friendly to truth when properly applied.' Sheltered then, under the wing of inspiration, and screened by the wall of a sound philosophy, I hope I may not be hastily condemned for presuming to apply the razor of satire to some of the offensive limbs of the Hopkinsian image.

The reason why the *false* prophets did not retaliate upon the prophets of God, in the use of their own weapon, is very obvious. In the sacred char-

acter of the true God, there was every thing calculated to inspire lowly reverence, and profound respect, and nothing to excite a spirit of ridicule : but in the character of the heathen idols, (that is nothings,) and in the conduct of their votaries, there were an abundance of things ridiculous in themselves ; and hence they were treated with merited contempt. Thus much for an apology. Perhaps I may have indulged in the use of this weapon more than I ought—for every such offence, I ask the reader's pardon—but I candidly think, that many of Mr. W's positions are perfectly ridiculous in themselves, and therefore merit not a serious refutation.

But though Mr. W. has no “ personal quarrel?” with the Author of the Letters, he nevertheless, with great gravity, endeavours from p. 186 to 189, to clothe us with the transforming robe of Satan, and to class us with his ministers.

It appears always to have been the master-piece of Satan's subtlety, in imposing upon mankind, to blend truth and falsehood together. “ Let us suppose,” says this grave defender of reformed doctrines, “ for a moment, that a precise number were given to him, (that is to Christ) as the reward of his sufferings, and that all this number will, through grace, come to him and be saved ; and in connexion with this, let us suppose that one of the professed teachers of his religion should say, ‘ This is one of the most shocking ideas that can enter into the heart of man’; would Christ own such a man, as one of his ministers ?” p. 187. This quotation is not introduced with any view directly to vindicate myself from the very charitable insinuation of our grave antagonist that I am a minister of Satan ; but it is done principally with a design to detect an erroneous view of what I had said respecting the “ shocking idea.” He here represents me as say-

ing, that it is “one of the most shocking ideas that can enter into the heart of man,” that one of those who he supposes was eternally and unconditionally elected, would never so fall away as to perish; but we shall soon see how artfully truth and error are blended together in this representation.

In his sermon on Election and Reprobation, p. 57. he had asserted that God had determined before Esau was born that he should be a “vessel of wrath fitted to destruction”—and this was the idea which I said was one of the most *shocking which the heart of man could conceive*—and not because some were chosen in Christ, who must inevitably be saved. The doctrine of Election and infallible perseverance, did it not involve the doctrine of unconditional reprobation and infallible perseverance in wickedness, might be borne with: but it is that dreadful counterpart of Hopkinsianism, which declares, according to the above assertion of Mr. W. that myriads of unborn souls are consigned to the regions of eternal woe, and that unconditionally and infallibly, without any respect to their wicked works foreseen, that we consider so shocking to a benevolent mind. Some have doubted whether our antagonists do hold to such a sentiment, namely, that God brings some beings into existence on purpose to damn them eternally; but the question is removed beyond all doubt by the above bare-faced assertion of the vindicator of reformed doctrines.

Whether it is characteristic of a minister of Satan to misrepresent the doctrine of an antagonist for the purpose of prostrating his opposers, I shall not take upon me to determine. But that Mr. W. has, in several instances, distorted our doctrine, thereby defacing the lovely image of truth which we defend, I believe will be evident to all who consult the preceding pages. How far he may

have been unintentionally betrayed into this unfortunate method of defence, by the heat of controversial zeal, and by a fond attachment to a favourite theory, must be determined by his own deliberate judgment. Without assuming the office of a judge in respect to his *motive*, or the *cause* of his mistakes, I only have to lament that such a system should ever have floated upon the surface of the human mind, as should raise such a thick mist as to bewilder its friends into such mistaken views of divine truth, and such censorious views of the character of their antagonists ; for while Mr. W's great gravity will not allow him to indulge in an innocent irony, and his great candour forbids his misrepresenting his opponent, and his ardent charity prompts him greatly to desire my salvation, he nevertheless thinks most candidly that, if I am not eternally reprobated, I am yet in a *state of reprobation* ; for he says, “*that if we do not love them,*” (that is his *peculiar* doctrines) “*it is because we are in a state of unregeneracy*”—and this remark he considered of “such great importance that he dare not omit it.” p. 239.

Neither will we affirm positively that his determined opposition to Gospel holiness or Christian perfection, (so strongly insisted upon in the sacred scriptures, (and his ardent wish “to drive the direct witness of the Spirit out of the world,”) are infallible marks of a minister of Satan : We would rather impute this extreme desire to exterminate this lovely tree of Paradise from the garden of the Lord, and his great solicitude to retain and to partake of the tree of knowledge of *good* and *evil*, which he insists must be the portion of all Christians while they live—(for notwithstanding he says p. 118, that “The scriptures have not furnished us with any such compound terms, to distinguish such as have some holiness mixed with some sin, some

wisdom with some folly," he yet manifests an extreme attachment to this mixed tree, which bears "some holiness and some sin," so strikingly resembling that fatal tree of Paradise of which our first parents partook)—I say we would rather impute his strong attachment to this mixed state to the influence of that entwining serpent *error*, from whose influence even *good* men, and especially those who have only "some good mixed with some evil" are not always exempted. Why should we impugn the *motives* of our antagonist? Is it not possible for a candid man to be so far imposed upon by the illusive influence of error, and so far blinded by prejudice, as to think he is *doing God service*, while he opposes some important truths of God's word? All we wish, at present, is, that our readers may beware how they mistake this compound tree of *good* and *evil* which Mr. W. has recommended to the world, as the most effectual means of *making one wise* unto salvation, for that ever blooming *tree of life* which the Lord God hath planted in his holy garden, the church, the doctrinal *leaves of which are for the healing of the nations*. The fruit of this tree is *pure* and *good*, and those who eat continually thereof shall live for ever.

One more mistake I wish to rectify,—and O that it might be the last—for it is an irksome task to be reduced to the necessity of dwelling so much upon the infirmities of our fellow creatures. Mr. W. says p. 185, "Soundness of doctrine is essential to the ministers of Christ." This we grant. And is not therefore *unsoundness* of doctrine essential to a minister of Satan? But he makes this declaration in connexion with a paragraph in which he notices my concluding remarks, where it is said, "Did we refuse to preach, until the people had stipulated to give us three, five, ten, or twenty hundred dollars annually, there might be some cause to sus-

pect we were actuated by sinister motives, and that our ministry was founded in selfishness ;' and he labours much to show, what I never controverted, that "receiving a salary is no mark of a minister of Satan." His remarks upon this part of our subject would induce a belief that I had made this the *only* criterion of Satan's ministers : whereas I never said that it was any characteristic at all. I said, if we *refused* to preach *until* the people had *stipulated* to give us, &c. there might be some cause to suspect, &c. The old proverb is, *Hit the bird and the feathers will fly.* I had previously exhibited our *doctrines*, contrasting them with the *distinguishing* traits of Hopkinsianism, as an evidence of our being called of God ; and also adverted to the *experience* and gospel labours of the Methodists ministry as an evidence of the purity of their faith, and of their benevolent designs : but all this is passed over in silence by our candid disputant, fixing his attention upon a concluding remark upon which no particular stress was laid.

In respect to this particular, we may observe, that although the apostle Paul vindicated the claim of the ministers of the Lord Jesus to a competent support from those with whom they laboured in the Lord, thereby showing that all such ministers are entitled to such pecuniary support, yet we have no account that, previous to his entering on his ministerial labours, he *stipulated* with the people for a specific amount. The primitive preachers and Evangelists, having received a commission from their Lord, it was *woe* to them, whatever temporal sacrifices they might be called to make in consequence of obeying their divine call, if they preached not the gospel. If the people, who were blessed with their ministry, were negligent in communicating to their temporal wants, the sin lay at their door. We have no doubt, and our practice con-

firms the observation, but that it is the imperious duty of the people to see that their ministers are comfortably supported: and those people who through inattention, or penuriousness, allow their ministers to suffer on account of poverty, are, we believe, highly culpable in the sight of God. But this neglect on the part of the people, is not sufficient to excuse a minister of God, if he hold his peace. Having received a commission from God to proclaim salvation in the name of Jesus Christ, he must persevere in the discharge of his highly responsible office, whether the people will hear or forbear, support or not support. Let him conscientiously discharge *his* duty, clear *his* skirts; and if the people presume to rob him of his just demand, let *them* answer it at the tremendous day of reckoning.

But it is a little extraordinary that Mr. W. should fix his attention upon this article alone, as though we did not consider "soundness of doctrine essential" to a gospel ministry; especially as I had previously mentioned this, and had exhibited our *doctrines, experience, and practice*, to prove that we *believed, experienced, and laboriously taught* the truth. After evincing that Mr. W.'s system, so far as it referred *all sin* to God as its *efficient cause*, plead for sin in the heart and life as long as we live, &c. was in perfect conformity to what Satan has all along taught, it was observed, p. 289—'Whether our doctrines are such as deserve to be ranked among the doctrines of Satan or not, the intelligent reader who has consulted them, must determine.' Then our leading doctfrines were stated, which were in substance as follows;—1. 'God governs the world in wisdom, justice and goodness, so that sin is not produced by him.' 2. 'Man was created holy.' 3. 'He unnecessarily sinned, and plunged himself and all his posterity into misery.' 4. 'To

rescue man from this deplorable condition, Jesus Christ undertook his cause, and made a complete atonement for the sin of the whole world.' 5. 'Those therefore who are finally reprobated, are reprobated because they voluntarily reject the offers of pardon and salvation.' 6. 'Man has nothing good in him by nature.' 7. 'The doctrine of election which we teach is founded in the unbounded goodness of God.' 8. 'Salvation is of grace through faith in the Lord Jesus.' 9. 'Justified believers must continually *grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.*' 10. 'In order to this, they must *watch and pray*, and live by faith in the Son of God.' 11. 'And persevering in holiness, they should be eternally saved.' Then it was asked, '*Is this the doctrine of Satan?*' See p. 289—291 of the Errors, &c.

Was there, then, any just reason for Mr. W. to intimate that we were indifferent respecting doctrine; or that we did not consider purity of doctrines essential to a gospel ministry? Why then have we taken so much pains to clear away the rubbish of Hopkinsian absurdities, that we might exhibit that sacred edifice of scripture doctrine, which was erected by inspired Prophets and Apostles, *Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone?* Or will he undertake to prove that the above doctrines are the doctrines of Satan? We think this would cost him more time and labour than he has to spare. Let him, indeed, dress us in the coat of Pelagius, and cover us with the flowing robe of the Pharisees, and paint our face with the offensive colouring of merit-mongers, and he may make us appear as ugly and as black as Satan himself: but the sponge of truth will easily rub off the artificial colouring, and the kind hand of candour will gently pull off those foreign and borrowed robes, so that we may be exhibited in the seamless robe of right-

eousness which we have received from the Lord Jesus, and with our face washed in the *pure water* issuing from the *Throne of God and the Lamb*. But if our disputant think himself competent to prove that the above doctrines belong to Satan, if he publish again, let him dip his pen in the fountain of eternal truth, and then, if he can, shew the coincidence of any one of those truths to the blasphemous errors of Satan. He may find Satan's suggestions in a variety of places in scripture.

He says p. 182. "The things, which Mr. B. has said in favour of their ministers will not prove with certainty, that they are not the ministers of Satan transformed into the apostles of Christ." Now what are the things which I have said in favour of the Methodist ministry? I endeavoured to prove,

1. That they had an experimental knowledge of Jesus Christ; or in other words, That they gave evidence that they were *born of God*, by the righteousness of their lives. And it is well known to all who are acquainted with our spiritual economy, that none are admitted into the ministry until we have satisfactory evidence of their union with God through faith in the Lord Jesus. Hence it is said respecting those who think they are called of God to this sacred employment; 'Do they know God as a pardoning God? Have they the love of God abiding in them? Do they desire and seek nothing but God? And are they holy in all manner of conversation?' Discipline p. 29. 14th Ed. I would ask any reasonable Christian, whether he supposes a *Minister of Satan*, knows *God as a pardoning God*, so that the *love of God dwells in him*, and which is exemplified by being holy in *all manner of conversation*? And let it be remembered that the truth of this is not merely tested by the bare profession of the candidate; but he must furnish substantial

proof from a previous trial in the Church as a member, as an exhorter, and then as a local preacher; in all which relations he must exhibit those tempers and conduct which are compatible with the doctrines, precepts, and spirit of the Gospel. But he must also shew that he has ‘gifts (as well as grace) for the work. ‘Have they’ (it is also asked) ‘a clear, sound understanding, a right judgment in the things of God, a just conception of salvation by faith? And has God given them any degree of utterance? Do they speak justly, readily, clearly? Have they fruit? Are any truly convinced of sin, and converted to God, by their preaching? As long as these three marks concur in any one, we believe he is called of God to preach’: *ibid.*

It should be remarked that these evidences are required before he is received into the itinerating ministry—after which he is on trial two years before he is admitted as a member of an Annual Conference—during which time, if he is found deficient, either in experience, doctrine, or practice, gifts, grace, or usefulness, he is dismissed from the ministry.

2. I endeavoured *secondly*, to evince that our ministry were *sound in doctrine*. What those doctrines are may be seen above. If any of them can be proved false, or congenial to the suggestions of Satan, we will then review our ground, and acknowledge our mistake.

3. It was shewn from the *manner* in which we laboured in the gospel field, that it was hardly possible to be actuated by mercenary motives. And if any doubt on this subject, the most effectual way to remove their scepticism will be, to forsake their domestic, or parish life, and enter the ranks with us, follow our steps, ‘o'er hill and dale,’ and refuse to receive any more pecuniary reward than we do. We do not say, indeed, that this is an *infallible*

proof that none are actuated by selfish views; for how far Satan may influence a *novice* to impose upon himself and others, in order to reproach the cause of Christ, we presume not to determine; but thus much we say, that a man must be the merest novice in the universe, to associate himself to the Methodist ministry from a view to fame, honour, ease, or temporal aggrandizement: if he have no other reproach, he will have the honour of being classed, by some rigid Hopkinsians, with the minions of Satan. We moreover say, that under such circumstances, it seems very *unlikely* that any man should long continue in a course of life which must disappoint all his expectations; especially when he must know that the very moment he is detected, he must be disgraced, by a removal from his office.

4. It was evinced that a *righteous life* is essentially necessary to entitle a man to a seat among us. Neither is this ever dispensed with on any occasion.

Now, pray tell us, ye ministerial casuists, If a man can know God as a pardoning God, can have the Holy Spirit dwell in his heart, can have a clear perception of salvation by faith, a clear, sound understanding in the things of God, be orthodox in the doctrines of the gospel, be conscientiously diligent in the discharge of his ministerial duties, and exemplify in his life the righteous precepts of the gospel,—and yet be a minister of Satan? If he can, we should be glad to know the discriminating marks of a minister of the Lord Jesus? Must he, in addition to these things, be a presbyterian? or must he *bonafide* hold to unconditional predestination, and preach that God is the efficient cause of sin. If, indeed, the rejecting these points be characteristic of Satan's ministers, then we acknowledge we are his vassals, and shall rejoice in bearing the reproach while we live. But we know of no place

in the Holy Scriptures where the ministers of God are commanded to preach that doctrine ; unless Mark xvi. 16. can be made to mean that—‘ Preach the Gospel to EVERY CREATURE !

But I beg leave here to declare, once for all, that so far as the Hopkinsians, Methodists, or whoever they may be, are not *experimentally* acquainted with the grand doctrines of the gospel ; so far as they either directly or indirectly charge *The holy One of Israel* with having ordained, and as now influencing men to sin ; represent Him as damning the reprobates for fulfilling his decree in all they do ; for not believing in Christ to the salvation of their souls, when he never intended to save them though he died for them ; say that, though they were unconditionally doomed to destruction, they are yet in a salvable state ; declare that we must live in sin every moment of our lives, and that pride, hardness of heart, blindness of mind, &c. are productive of humility, &c. plead that sin works for our good ; deny the necessity of justification by faith in Christ, and holiness of heart ; and say that all the abominations of mankind are not only pleasing to the Almighty, but are produced by Him ; so far as any professed ministers are wanting in this gospel experience, and so far as they propagate these most destructive sentiments, it is our deliberate judgment, that they do, in the most effectual manner, subserve the cause of Satan. Such sentiments strike most directly at the root of all the Divine perfections, sully the glory of his adorable attributes, falsify his word, undermine the grand system of salvation by grace, transfer the responsibility of all human and diabolical agents to God, and endanger the present and eternal salvation of men.

On the other hand, those who leave these offensive traits of Hopkinsian divinity out of the question, (though they may hold to them in theory,) .

and preach those distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, namely, The holiness, wisdom, justice, power, and goodness of God ; human depravity ; the atonement of Christ ; repentance ; justification by faith in Christ ; holiness of heart and life ; and all those truths necessarily connected with these :— Those who do this, by whatever name they may be distinguished—and do it from an *inward experience* of the saving efficacy of Jesus' blood—we fully believe they are the ministers of the Lord Jesus—and are the honoured instruments of promoting his cause among men. Hence we have no doubt but that there are those among the Calvinists and Hopkinsians, whose hearts glow with love to God, and an ardent desire for the salvation of their fellow men : The prejudice of education may prevent their perceiving the fatal tendency of their system, and thinking it true, they may deem it their duty to defend it. How far the Lord who is *gracious and merciful*, may make allowance for mental errors, arising from youthful prejudice, or unavoidable ignorance, is not for us to say. But while we make this acknowledgment, we mean to be understood as speaking of those who do not obstinately shut their eyes against the light of truth, and who do not pertinaciously contend with others by distorting and mangling their sentiments for the purpose of obtaining an argumentative conquest : neither do we mean to say, that we believe God ever blesses the preaching of those parts of their system which we have considered as such dangerous errors. To the feet of all such, who believe, experience, and teach those glorious doctrines of the gospel above mentioned, by whatever name they may be distinguished, would we gladly sit, and be instructed ; and cordially unite in the harmony of the gospel, in proclaiming salvation to a lost world.

How far the experience and practice of all my brethren in the ministry, under the name of Methodists, may correspond to the truths they profess to believe and teach, is not for me to say.—We know, however, that it is very possible to hold to the truth in unrighteousness. It is one thing to believe upon given evidence of the truth, and another to experience and practise in conformity to it. Though erudition and human science are ornaments and qualifications greatly to be desired by all public teachers, yet all the merely human learning in the world,—even if we were masters of the whole circle of the sciences,—yet if we were destitute of a saving knowledge of God in Christ, if destitute of the internal energies of the Holy Spirit, we are unfit for the sacred work of the ministry. Let it not, however, be understood, that we contemn, or undervalue scientifical attainments. No; we consider them, next to the enlightening and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit upon the heart, among the greatest helps to a right understanding, and a clear explication of God's sacred word. If God, therefore, see fit to call men with these human embellishments, or if they have opportunity after having entered upon the important work, to acquire them, let them neither be undervalued nor overated, but estimated according to their intrinsic worth, as most desirable auxiliaries to a minister of the Lord Jesus.

But *soundness of doctrine, purity of experience, motive and conduct, a conscientious observance of every precept of the holy Gospel, and an active diligence in the pursuit of divine knowledge, as well as a laborious perseverance in search of lost souls,* we consider among the grand characteristics of an ambassador of heaven. Such a man, clothed with authority from the Sovereign of heaven and earth, will furnish more than human credentials that

he is sent of God to seek after the lost sheep of the house of Israel. His word will be anointed with the *holy unction*; and when he speaks in the name of his Sovereign, divine authority attends the word, and the hearts of his audience are made to tremble, while he announces in their ears the awful thunders of Sinai; and the desponding mourner looks up with reviving hope, and reclining faith, while this messenger of the skies exhibits the peculiar glories of the God-Man, and pours forth the consoling promises of pardon and salvation, in the name of his divine Master: while, with an eloquence which could only be inspired from heaven, this man of God pourtrays the exalted privilege of perfect love, and the indescribable glories of the world to come, the happy believer is ravished with supreme delight. Here then is the true minister of the sanctuary. Adorned with the graces of the Holy Spirit, penetrating into the sacred mysteries of redemption, unfolding with his artless tongue, the wonders of redeeming grace, and proclaiming the impartial love of God to a ruined world, his listening audience is captivated with the charms of divine truth, and the glowing ardour of divine love. If human science be superadded to his other attainments, he shines, indeed, with superior splendour; but if that be all of which he can boast, he is but a *sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal.*

It is, indeed, to be feared, that there are those among ourselves, as well as among others, who, either by their ignorance, their indolence, or their want of experience in divine things; or by their pride, their self-conceit, or their self-importance; who may give cause to the enemies of truth to speak reproachfully. It is to be hoped, however, that the number of such is small; and that if there be any, they may be brought to a better mind.

For my own part, I have embraced the doctrines of the Methodists from a conviction of their truth; and adhere to them, and employ my feeble powers in their defence, because I fully believe them. And I am the more confirmed in this belief, from the consideration that our polemical adversaries are reduced to the sad necessity of misstating our views, before they can enter the field against us, with any prospect of success. This, I trust, has been fully evinced in the preceding pages. May we so read, write, preach and live, as to *commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

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## CHAPTER IX.

*Remarks on "natural ability" and "moral inability."*

ONE of the most convincing evidences of the truth of any system is, its exact conformity to the moral perfections of God, and its suitableness to the moral condition of man. And whenever this is perceived in any system, we shall, at the same time, perceive a harmony in its several parts, one truth growing out of another, and the various branches of truth mutually depending upon, and supporting each other. And that which recommends Christianity to the consideration of intelligent beings is, that it perspicuously illustrates the divine perfections, exhibits the character of man as our daily experience proves it to be, adapts itself to our moral condition, by the sovereign remedy it has provided for our spiritual disease, and by presenting to the enlightened mind a harmonious system of doctrines and precepts. While, therefore, we contemplate

this glorious system, our minds are delighted in beholding, the beauty, order, and sacred harmony, so visibly manifested in every part of it. It is like a well contrived, and a well finished building in which nothing is wanting, nothing superfluous ; so that, while we view this sacred edifice, we not only behold a permanent foundation on which it securely rests, but also a superstructure of exquisite workmanship, the lovely harmony of the several parts in which, mutually supporting and strengthening each other, being *fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.*

But while we behold this internal evidence of the divine authority of the gospel, in the sacred harmony and exquisite beauty of the Christian building, our minds turn with avidity and disgust from the heterogenous mixture of those materials with which the discordant temple of error is composed. How much so ever the art and ingenuity of men may display themselves, in decorating the external appearance of this confused edifice, its internal deformity, when examined in the light of truth, exhibits convincing evidence of its human origin, and of its defective structure. Instead of beholding that *Zion which is the perfection of beauty, out of which God hath shined,* we perceive evident marks of that gloomy mansion, where the Sun of truth never shines but to reveal the rottenness of its foundation, and the weakness of its superstructure.

We shall see, I trust, these remarks verified while examining Mr. Williston's theory of *natural ability* and *moral inability*. It is true, we have not much to object to his explanation of his views of this subject only as they are connected with other parts of his system : for we grant that every sinner "has powers and faculties which belong to his nature as a rational moral agent, which are sufficient to enable him to do all that which he is commanded."

p. 230—But we contend that this is only true when the sinner is viewed in relation to the *gospel* representation of Redemption and Salvation, which exhibits the ample provision made by Jesus Christ for the present and eternal salvation of all mankind; for no man can have, either *natural* or *moral* ability, to do an impossibility: but if a part of the human family were eternally reprobated, and thereby excluded from any saving benefits of redemption, their eternal salvation was absolutely and eternally impossible. And have these excluded reprobates *natural* ability to do that which is *naturally* and *absolutely* impossible? If their salvation were *possible*, then the Hopkinsian decree of reprobation is a human decree. If it were *impossible*, then their doctrine of natural ability to love God is worse than human. They may extricate themselves from this dilemma in any way their system will admit. If they break down the first barrier, they annihilate their doctrine of decrees: If the second, they destroy this peculiarity of Hopkinsianism, and confirm the doctrine of the old fashioned Calvinists: But if, with a bolder flight, they leap over them both, they will find themselves happily escaped into the open plains of gospel truth, where rivers of divine love flow to all the human race, which so washes off the defects of *natural ability*, and supplies by its invigorating influence, the deficiency of a *moral inability*, that they may come to Christ, the flowing fountain of eternal life, drink, and live for ever. How absurd it is to suppose that a man has *natural* power to regenerate himself, in direct *opposition* to his *inclination*, and to prepare himself, by loving God with all his heart, for heaven, when at the same time, Christ had no *intention* of saving him when he died for him, and his eternal damnation was made unalterably certain by God's irrevocable decree. Therefore, although it is proper to say that men have physical

and moral powers to do what God requires of them, when enlightened by the Spirit of truth, and when comprehended in the grand scheme of redemption ; yet, it appears extremely absurd to suppose they have natural power to do this in direct *opposition* to the *eternal* purpose, and the *present* agency of God. This would be to invest man with a power to overcome the omnipotent decree of Jehovah, and to do that which was rendered absolutely impossible by an act of God himself. Does any one perceive the beauty of truth in this deformed face of Hopkinsianism ?

Moreover, it seems unscriptural to suppose that men have *natural* ability to perceive and understand the way of life and salvation, only as they are enlightened by the word and Spirit of God ; for the understandings of men are darkened in consequence of original depravity, their ears are dull of hearing, and they cannot see spiritual objects unless divine illumination is afforded them : how then, can they have *natural*, while they have no *moral power* to love God ? We grant, indeed, that all men have sufficient powers of mind to understand, and to do, what God requires them to understand and do, when they are enlightened and empowered by grace ; and that this grace is afforded to all men during their probationary state : but this truth grows out of that true proposition of the gospel, (which Hopkinsianism denies in its first principle respecting universal decrees,) namely, that Christ, by his death and suffering has made salvation possible to all men. I know, indeed, that Mr. W. has asserted that Jesus Christ “ has put all men into a *salvable* state ;” but we also know, that this assertion can never be reconciled with his doctrine of an eternal, definite, and absolute reprobation : and neither will his plaster of *natural ability* ever heal the wound which the keen razor of truth has made in

this limb of his hydra ; it being certain that no man has *natural ability* to do that which God, by an immutable decree, has made impossible to be done.

But why is this doctrine of natural ability and moral inability contended for ? It is, it would appear, to vindicate the claims of divine justice in the final and perpetual condemnation of those unhappy reprobates, who were eternally condemned in the mind of God ; whose *inability* and *ability* with all their effects and causes are in exact conformity to the original intention, and the present existing agency of God. But pray tell us, how does this vindicate the claims of divine justice ? If the bow be bent by the marksman in just such a direction as he would have it, so as to answer his purpose precisely ; and if from long use, it contract an inclination to that particular direction ; is the bow accountable for not altering its inclination ? So, if the hearts of these poor reprobates are *inclined* by an Almighty and effective decree to a particular direction, namely, to sin and damnation ; and if they perfectly answer the mind of God in all they passively do, must they be eternally condemned for possessing a *moral inability* to alter their *inclination*, and turn themselves about, and save themselves *contrary* to the original design of God ? This would seem a hard case indeed. Of what use, now, can this new-fangled doctrine of *natural ability*, and *moral inability* be in vindicating the justice of God in the condemnation of the reprobates ? It can serve no other purpose than to hide the real state of the doctrine for which Mr. W. has so zealously contended in the first chapter of his book.

If, however, we search this theory to the bottom, we shall find it full of deception. That this may be done, we will propound a few questions, subjoining

such answers as the Hopkinsian minister, would, if true to his theory, give.

Q. Do you believe that Jesus Christ tasted death for every man? A. 'Yes.'

Q. Did Christ design the reprobates should be eternally interested in the merits of his death?

A. 'No.'

Q. But are all men put into a *salvable* state?

A. 'Yes.'

Q. Could they have been saved contrary to his design? A. 'Yes.'

Q. How? A. 'They have *natural ability* to break God's decree.'

Q. You believe, then, all may be saved if they will? A. 'Yes.'

Q. What then hinders their salvation?

A. 'Their *moral inability*, to repent and believe the Gospel.'

Q. How came they by this *moral inability*?

A. 'By a wise constitution of God, it is considered a consequence of Adam's sin?'

Q. Did Adam sin freely and unnecessarily?

A. 'Yes.'

Q. Who influenced his will?

A. 'God, by force of his decree, operated directly on his will, exciting him thereby to comply with the external motive.'

Q. Did God design Adam should be influenced to sin, when he made him? and did Adam fulfil by that act, the will of his Maker? A. 'Yes, he did.'

Q. God then decreed that Adam should sin?

A. 'Yes.'

Q. Could Adam have broken that decree?

A. 'Yes; as easy as I can snap a tow string.'

Q. How so? A. 'He had natural ability.'

Q. Was then the decree irresistible? A. 'Yes.'

Q. How could it have been broken?

A. 'It could not; because there was a *moral inability*.'

Q. How? It could not, and yet it could? A. 'O yes,—there is no contradiction here—because there was a *natural ability* which is never exercised, and a *moral inability*, which always governs.'

Q. Did God design the *inability* always to govern? A. 'Yes.'

Q. Of what use then is this *natural ability* of which you speak?

A. 'It serves to obviate the *Arminian* objection against the doctrine of unconditional reprobation, by vindicating the justice of God from the impeachment of partiality and cruelty in the condemnation of the reprobates.'

Q. But is not the impediment of a *moral inability* as great as a *natural inability* would have been?

A. 'Yes; but it fixes the culpability of impenitence upon the sinner himself, because it refers his obstinacy to the perversity of his *will*, and says he *will not come to Christ and live.*'

Q. But is not this *perversity of will* under the control of God, and perfectly answerable to his good pleasure? A. 'Yes.'

Q. Do you not also affirm that it is in consequence of Adam's sin? A. 'Yes.'

Q. And this sin with all its consequences, was in conformity to God's original design, and agreeable to his will? A. 'Yes.'

Q. And how then can sinners be justly culpable for acting under the influence of a resistless decree, and for fulfilling the eternal designs of God?

A. '\_\_\_\_\_.'

Q. Your silence, Sir, indicates the perplexity into which your system has thrown you, does it not? Did not God decree that precisely so many of the human family should be eternally miserable without any respect to their wicked works foreseen?

A. 'Yes.'

Q. Were not all their sins decreed, and brought

to pass by the exciting agency of God? A. 'Yes; most certainly.'

Q. Are they justly responsible for those sins which God produces in their hearts himself, and which contribute to the good of the universe?

A. 'We consider it self-evident that mankind are responsible. No man in his senses will deny it.'

Q. That is not the question. Can you assign any reason on your system why they should be responsible?

A. 'Yes; because the reprobates may be saved if they will.'

Q. How? Those reprobates who were damned from all eternity may be saved if they will?

A. 'They have *natural ability* to save themselves.'

Q. Have they any grace? A. 'No; but they have natural ability to love God without grace.'

Q. Why then do they not love him, and thereby convert themselves into a *gracious* state without any grace?

A. 'Because they will not.'

Q. But God has decreed that this *will not* shall be converted into a *shall not*; that is, He has decreed they *never shall* be saved—has he not?

A. 'Yes; but they have natural power to *break* that decree.'

Q. Have they then an *ability* and an *inability* to be saved at the same time? A. 'Yes.'

Q. Is there no contradiction here? A. 'No.'

Q. This then is your faith, is it? A. 'Yes.'

Q. Will you be so kind as to favour us with some scripture proof of your doctrine?

A. ——'I believe I cannot.'

This candid confession, while it gives a favourable impression of the honesty of your heart, affords an irrefragable evidence of the falsity of your theory, which amounts to this—The reprobates have a *natural ability* to be saved without

grace ; and as St. Paul has said, *By grace ye are saved*, it proves that you have invented another system of salvation besides that revealed in the gospel ; or else, that all your talk about *natural ability* to be saved, is invented for the deception of mankind, who abhor the doctrine of unconditional reprobation—and that they have a *moral ability* to be damned, which they must and will use ; which appears to have been invented as a substitute for the irresistible decree of reprobation ; and which the asserters of this doctrine of a *dual ability* consider so important that they are not willing to sacrifice it upon the altar of truth ; and therefore they have borrowed this pharisaic robe to wrap around the offensive part of the Calvinistic image, to hide its inconsistencies from the view of rational minds.

All those who have made themselves acquainted with the distinguishing traits of Hopkinsianism, will perceive that the answers subjoined to the preceding questions, are in perfect conformity to its peculiar principles ; and, indeed, many of them the author has had given to him in conversation with some Hopkinsian ministers. The inferences to be drawn from such contradictory assertions, are so obvious, that it is thought needless to pursue them here. A man, indeed, must sacrifice common sense, scripture, and his rational powers, to believe them, after perceiving their native tendency.

Now, we say, that this doctrine has a deceitful influence. Those who preach the Hopkinsian peculiarities respecting the atonement of Christ, *natural* and *moral* ability, unless they in the mean time stop to explain themselves respecting their doctrine of decrees, delude people into a belief that they believe God is willing to have mercy upon all mankind : when, at the same time, they firmly believe that an antecedent decree secur-

ed the damnation of a definite number styled reprobates, from all eternity ; that all the sins of their lives were not only decreed, but are now effected by the efficient operation of God upon their hearts ; that their *moral inability* is also the effect of the divine efficiency upon their will : but that, although they were thus predestinated to sin and damnation, Jesus Christ made an atonement for them, and now invites them to come to him and be saved, in direct opposition to the eternal decree of God, though he never had any intention of saving them. Now, pray tell us, how this notion of a *moral inability* thus induced, and which is perfectly pleasing to God, can fix the culpability of its operations upon man, and vindicate that other essential part of Hopkinsianism, from *cruelty* in the condemnation of the reprobates, which says, that this inability, and all its pernicious effects, were unalterably fixed by an irreversible decree.

Its deceitfulness furthermore appears in holding out offers of salvation to those devoted reprobates, who were eternally doomed to utter destruction ; thereby deluding them into a belief that Christ is willing to save them. How can a Hopkinsian minister, who fully believes that a definite number of the human family were unconditionally destined to eternal ruin, all of whose sins are brought into existence by the exciting agency of God, declare, at the same time, that their sins might be avoided, that they might be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth ? seeing he believes at the same time, that those persons are held, by the efficient operation of God upon their hearts, under the invincible restraint of a *moral inability*. Must not the asserters of this doctrine have some mental reserve, when they thus unfold the willingness of God to save *all* mankind ? And how can this notion of a *natural ability* to love God without grace, when viewed in

connexion with this *moral inability*, and the existing agency of God in the production of moral evil, vindicate either the goodness or justice of God, in punishing mankind under such forbidding circumstances? Instead of exhibiting the character of God as in reality it is, this doctrine represents him in the characters of duplicity and cruelty—having one will to *save* his creatures, and another to *damn* them—and as mocking those with an offer of *salvation*, who were designed for *damnation* from all eternity.—Now to say to persons in such circumstances that they are in a *salvable* state, and that God takes no pleasure in their eternal death, is to flatter them with false appearances.

It would appear, therefore, that this heterogeneous mixture of *natural ability* and *moral inability*, has been compounded for the purposes of healing the wound which the sword of truth has made in that part of the dagon of Calvinism whence unconditional reprobation grew; and yet, its zealous partizans, not being willing to abandon this idol of their hearts, have invented this salvo to make this image of deformity appear somewhat like the chaste virgin, pure Christianity, who, though she reprobates her *disobedient* children, it is because they unnecessarily defile themselves by wilfully plunging into the mire of iniquity; and then refuse to be washed in the *fountain opened for sin and uncleanness*.

This theory, indeed, respecting natural and moral ability, appears plausible enough when viewed by itself. If by a moral inability be meant, that the only reason why the sinner is not saved is, that he *will not be saved* upon the terms of the gospel, we yield to the correctness of the sentiment when viewed in connexion with that prominent truth of the gospel, which declares that Jesus Christ sincerely *tasted death for every man*; and which evin-

ces the plenitude of divine goodness in the ample provisions of the gospel for *all* men ; and when disconnected with the notion of an unconditional and definite reprobation. But when viewed in connexion with this last sentiment, it ceases to be *any reason at all* why men are not saved. A man firmly believing that God has, unconditionally, reprobated a definite number to sin and damnation, cannot seriously believe that their eternal destruction is only in consequence of their *refusing* to accept of mercy ; for, according to this scheme, there never was any mercy for them to accept : hence they never *refused* to accept it ; unless we absurdly suppose a man *refuses* that which was *never offered* him : On the contrary, this *moral inability itself*, by which the abettors of this doctrine suppose reprobates *refuse* mercy, is a consequence of God's decree of reprobation, and not the decree of reprobation a consequence of their *refusing* to accept of mercy. Now, if, according to this leading principle of Hopkinsianism, there never was any mercy or grace for these reprobates ; and if, according to Mr. Williston, Christ never designed to save them when he atoned for them, then *there never was any offer of salvation made them* ; and therefore they never *refused* to accept of salvation : how then, in the name of reason and common sense, can they be condemned for not *accepting* that which was *never offered* them ? Can a man be condemned for not doing that which God never designed he should do ? Therefore, we contend, that on the system of Hopkinsianism, which, in respect to individual reprobation, shakes hands with Calvinism, this twin doctrine of natural ability and moral inability, affords no reason at all for the final condemnation of the incorrigibly wicked. On this scheme the only potent reason for their eternal condemnation, is God's own good pleasure, which

is indicated in the irreversible decree of reprobation. Hence it is said, that this notion of *quarrelling abilities* it but an artificial covering to hide the dismal feature of Calvinistic reprobation.— However true, therefore, this doctrine of moral inability and natural ability, it can never harmonize with the Calvinistic decree of reprobation, nor serve the purposes of its authors in vindicating the claims of divine justice in the condemnation of reprobates.

This is not all: Man's responsibility, growing out of his free agency, is a truth so evident to every man, that although contradicted by the doctrine of irresistible decrees, it could not be discarded as an error. What then was to be done? Why, to avoid the appearance of direct hostility to this most evident truth, and save that fundamental part of Calvinism, universal decrees, the Hopkinsians have invented this novel doctrine of a *natural ability* to break God's decrees and get to heaven; but to prevent this giant of human nature from making such a fatal depredation upon the eternal purpose of God, this diminutive animal of a moral *inability*

\* Perhaps this expression may sound odd, as well as harsh to some of my readers. But yet, if duly considered, it will be found to convey appropriate ideas of these *abilities*; for, according to our antagonist, they are in perpetual hostility to each other. The *natural ability* is a *capacity or power* to love God: the *moral inability* is an *incapacity or want of power* to love him: so that, however this *natural ability* might exert itself in striving to love God, this *moral inability* hobbles in the way, and prevents the reprobate from loving God. And what is most lamentable, this *weak, peevish something*, called an *inability or want of power*, is always *master*, keeping this strong manly *something*, called an *ability*, always under his dominion. Such paradoxes are not uncommon, since we have been taught to believe that reprobates and devils may love God *if they will*. But *two abilities* pursuing such different ends, may certainly be said to *quarrel* with each other. They are, however, both *right*, if God's decrees are *right*, as the Hopkinsians doubtless believe they are.

proclaims war upon *natural ability*, overcomes him, and carries him, with the reprobate in which he inheres, captive to hell. To apologize for this rude conduct, it is said, that, in consequence of his *inability*, this reprobate has *freely* followed his inclination, chose and acted as he *pleased*, and therefore he is responsible: although, the friends of this desperado of an *inability*, fully believe that this unhappy man chose and acted under the immediate control of an Almighty energy: that all his wicked actions are the effect of a *Divine efficiency* directly operating upon his heart, and influencing his will; producing by this secret operation the desire and choice to do as he did; therefore, say they, he is free and accountable! How so? Why he had *natural power* to have resisted this divine operation, but no *moral power*, that is, he *choose* to do otherwise. Thus God, while he secretly influences the sinner to sin on and be damned, He makes him believe that he acts perfectly free.—For which of these must the sinner be condemned? For acting as God designed he should? or for being deceived in supposing himself free?

But the deceitfulness of this theoretical phantom does not end here. *Theoretical* errors have more or less influence upon the *practice* of mankind. If the human mind can once be brought to believe that the God of heaven can deal thus deceitfully with his blinded creatures, making them believe they are free, while bound by the influence of His own efficient hand, telling them they may be saved, though their damnation was secured eternally—as Christianity calls upon its votaries to imitate its adorable Author—how easy and natural to persuade ourselves that we may use the arts of deception with our fellow creatures. And how many are deceived in the present day by the influence of this pernicious system! While an old-

fashioned Calvinist tells you he believes in unconditional election and reprobation, he honestly confesses, that Jesus Christ never died for the reprobates, and therefore they cannot be saved: but a Hopkinsian, and Mr. W. for one, with an inconsistency peculiar to himself, though he professes faith in a partial covenant of redemption, and an eternal, unconditional reprobation, nevertheless, tells you that Christ "hath put all men into a *salvable state*;" that *all may* be saved if they *will*; while he believes those very reprobates act under the influence of a *moral inability*, resulting immediately from God's exciting agency. Now I ask every deliberate man, if the proclaiming a *free salvation* to *all* mankind, in connection with these partial views of the scheme of Redemption, and this restricted operation of divine goodness, does not indicate a solicitude to screen those vulnerable parts of their system from public inspection, and to impose upon the unsuspecting mind a fallacious hope in the mercy of God. Such must be the necessary effect of this doctrine upon all those whose piety is not sufficiently strong to counteract the deceitful influence of the system.

These things being considered, should we be surprised, if their system should so insensibly warp their minds from the honest simplicity of truth, as to induce them, when the interests of their cause require it, as much as possible to withhold from the public, their doctrine of a *secret* and eternal determination to *influence* men to *moral evil*, and then damn them for it,—while they proclaim aloud the *revealed will* of God, which invites *all* mankind to come to Christ and be saved? They certainly should not be censured for imitating the God they worship. And how far does this modern doctrine of a *secret will*, differ from the *occult science* of the ancient philosophers, and from the

secret mysteries of the *Eleusinian* school, taught and practised among the heathens, termed the *mysteries of the god*? Also, how intimately related is this conduct of our modern divines, who thus strive to cover up their doctrine of secret decrees, with the veil of a *natural* and *moral ability*, to the conduct of those heathen philosophers, whom the apostle condemns for *hiding* the truth unrighteously!

If they believe that God has *two wills* by which he is governed, one *secret*, and the other *revealed*, the *secret* declaring that mankind *shall sin*, and the *revealed* declaring he *shall not sin*, is it not natural to conclude that they may also have a *two-fold* end in view, one *secret* and real, which they steadily pursue, the other visible and *ostensible* merely, which they only profess to pursue? And if the *secret* will or decree of God is the “rule by which he regulates his own conduct” in opposition to his *revealed* will, would it be a wonder if those who have this double view of his conduct, should so far imitate him as to adopt a *secret* method for the attainment of a *secret end*, while they have a *revealed* method for the attainment of an *ostensible end*? And if they believe God deceives mankind by solemnly declaring he *hath no pleasure in their death*, notwithstanding he had *secretly decreed* their death *or ever the earth was, or the round world was made*, may they not be tempted to delude the people with great professions of love to their souls, while they are only seeking to enslave their consciences, and to aggrandize themselves at the people’s expense. Who will say that mankind ought to be more sincere and upright than the God they worship? Suppose this double mind should influence them to profess a mighty zeal for the honour and glory of God, while they only seek their own temporal aggrandizement, are they not sanctioned in this double dealing by their two-principled deity? What if such comprehen-

sive plans are devised as tend to draw all unsuspecting parties into them, under pretence of extending the influence of evangelical truth, while the *secret* design is to monopolize the wealth of the nation, and ultimately become independent of the people; can we say that the system we are opposing does not afford a pretext for such deceitful conduct? In the mean time, suppose, under a conviction that the system of truth, which *honestly* opens the door of mercy to *all* mankind, and *faithfully* declares the unwillingness of God that *any* should perish, had become so popular in some places, as to render an attack upon it dangerous; a man who believes in partial redemption, and predetermined reprobation, to hide his real sentiments, should openly profess his belief in the impartial doctrines of the gospel, and should declare to sinners that they all may be saved if they will—might not a man under such circumstances secretly silence the accusations of his conscience, by reminding himself that his God has a two-fold will, one *secret* and the other *revealed*? Is there any more appearance of *duplicity* in the conduct of such men, than there is in that conduct which the Hopkinsians ascribe to their God, when they say he *decreed* the eternal destruction of a *part* of mankind, and yet declares all may be saved if they will? If a man can persuade himself to believe that God, who has *forbidden* all manner of wickedness, does, nevertheless, *secretly incline* mankind to commit it, and then punishes them forever for having committed it, may he not also persuade himself that it is right for him to use artful insinuations, secretly designing thereby to impose upon the unsuspecting multitude, by his professions of love and good will, while his real object is to establish himself in some comfortable living?

We consider, therefore, that this doctrine, which wears such a deceitful aspect, has a most dan-

gerous tendency upon the morals of society. It naturally tends to corrupt the mind from that honest simplicity which characterizes the unsuspecting follower of the Lord Jesus ; and must ultimately weaken the bonds of moral obligation. For if I can believe that the God I worship is pleased with lying, cheating, stealing, &c. and that he has *decreed* and now *excites* in my heart a *disposition* to commit those evils, how natural to infer the lawfulness of indulging that disposition. It is true, the *lawfulness* of such criminal actions would be suspected by reflecting minds, because the *law of God forbids them* : but when it is suggested that this law is superseded by a *prior decree* of the same Almighty being, that its precepts should be violated ; and, to secure such violation, a *moral inability* had been induced by the secret operation of the divine hand upon the human heart, my sense of obligation to obey this law must be very much weakened, if not totally destroyed : and the present *inability* which I feel, and have been taught to refer to a *cause* totally beyond the reach of my control, furnishes me with an *excuse* for every immoral act. Thus does this fatal doctrine, by the native tendency of its several parts, gradually undermine the foundation of moral obligation, destroy the motives to a virtuous conduct, and furnishes man with an excuse for his criminal inclinations and actions.

Moreover, of what use is it to preach against wickedness, so long as we believe that such wickedness is the effect of a divine efficiency, perfectly pleasing to God, and *morally* impossible to be avoided ? We cannot, therefore, view this doctrine in any other light than a *cunningly devised fable*, softly insinuating itself into men's minds, with a view to obliterate from their remembrance those painful sensations which had been produced by Calvinistic reprobation ; and which has a most per-

nicious tendency in corrupting the mind from the simplicity of truth, and in exciting the vicious inclinations of mankind to criminal indulgence. It is certainly painful to feel under the necessity of saying these things. And we would, by no means, be understood that these sad effects are uniformly produced in the minds of all those who advocate the sentiments we oppose. Hume could theorize in his study, but, according to his own confession, his theory forsook him the moment he entered into company. He then thought and acted like other men; and exemplified in practice those self evident truths, which his private speculations taught him to reject. So that natural restraint which a sense of moral obligation imposes upon mankind, and the influence of evangelical truth on the Christian world, prevent the fatal tendency of that absurd system, which avers that men have *natural power* to break God's eternal decree, and a *moral ability* which always predominates, to keep that decree of reprobation; and which also asserts that every sinful act is induced by a pre-disposing cause which uniformly operates in conformity to the divine will and pleasure. And how far this system may have influenced its partizans to any of those evils which it seems naturally calculated to induce, it is not presumed to assert. But we seriously consider it the imperious duty of every man, who can distinguish between truth and error, virtue and vice, to use his influence in checking the progress of a system so manifestly tending to mischievous consequences, and so ruinous to the morals and souls of mankind. If we are under a mistake in our views respecting the doctrine now opposed, we have the consolation of reflecting, that we are conscientiously, and, after using the best helps to form a correct judgment, honestly deceived. We have the farther consolation in reflecting, that if our antagonists are *right*, we cannot

be *wrong*: but if we are *right* they are most certainly *wrong*: for if all mankind are under the influence of the efficient hand of God, whether by means of a *natural* or *moral* ability, so that all our powers are entirely directed by him, as God cannot do *wrong*, so we are infallibly *right*: but if the cause for which we contend, is founded in *truth*, then is the doctrine of our antagonists *wrong*, and they are also *doing wrong* in opposing us. Acting under the influence of this conviction, we feel ourselves excited from a sense of duty, to oppose those principles which we consider, not only erroneous in themselves, but also as having a pernicious influence upon the minds of men, and of most destructive consequence to the peace and happiness of human society.

Neither can we perceive how our antagonists can seriously retort these observations upon us. If they firmly believe their doctrine, that *all* things are according to the counsel of God's will, perfectly pleasing to him, how can they suppose any thing can have any farther a destructive influence than God designed it should? Certainly, if any thing be wrong, according to their theory, it must be so because God decreed it should be so. Why then do they manifest such an extreme solicitude respecting the result of those events which they believe are in perfect conformity to the original intention of Almighty God? Do they not, every time they oppose their theological adversaries, exhibit a practical refutation of their own principles, and evince a secret distrust in the correctness of their theory? They ought not, however, to be blamed for yielding to the influence of a *moral inability*, of which they found themselves blessed independent of their choice, and which is quite beyond their own control.

Not only the *doctrine* of a moral inability is contrary to sound divinity, but the *phraseology* is high-

ly objectionable. To speak properly, we should say that it is *morally impossible* any man should sin. Any thing is *morally impossible* which is contrary to the *moral law*. And it is *morally possible* for all men to obey the moral law. This maxim, as well as the manner of expressing it, derives its authority from the moral perfections of God, whose law is adapted to the moral condition of man, and who has surrounded man with those moral restraints as are calculated to deter him from sin, and with those moral incentives as are calculated to lead him to holiness. Being thus blessed with a knowledge of his moral duty, and surrounded with moral restraints and incentives, it is proper to say, it is *morally impossible* for man to violate the precepts of the law ; and *morally possible* he should obey them.— But finding that he resists all those incentives to holiness, and breaks through all those restraints, it is *naturally possible* (i. e. not absolutely impossible) for him to sin, and *naturally impossible* for him, of himself, to be holy. To overcome this natural impossibility, the grace of the gospel is afforded him ; which, gently instilling itself into the understanding, and powerfully drawing the heart towards God, the sinner, using his *moral powers* as he ought, willingly bows to the superior attraction of divine grace, and finally becomes a convert to Jesus Christ.

To say, therefore, that sinners have a *moral inability*, is to adopt a language repugnant to the laws of propriety,—being condemned by those legitimate inferences which originate from the moral perfections of God, and the moral adaption of his law, and the admirable fitness of his gospel, to the moral and relative condition of man. All things which the law of God commands, and all the gospel requires, are morally possible ; and therefore all who reject the gracious offers of the gospel, and disobey the injunctions of the law, do those things which

are morally impossible. They are denominated *morally impossible* because incompatible with a right use of man's moral powers ; and *morally possible* because they are precisely adapted to man's state as a free, *moral*, and responsible being. The gospel supplies all those defects which originate from man's native depravity.

Let us, however, examine this Hopkinsian theory respecting a moral inability, consisting altogether in the perversity of the *will*, a little further. According to that theory, the *will* is invested with a sort of sovereign authority over the man, impelling him to follow its fantastical dictates, wherever it may lead the way. Thus, in that system of theology, the *will* serves as a universal *menstruum*, dissolving all the knotty difficulties it contains, eating with such rapacity, that it acquires such gigantic strength as to break God's eternal decree, and bring the reprobate, who is destined by a divine order to hell, back to heaven. The *will*, in fact, according to this theory, is exalted to a god, and exercises in the empire of Hopkinsianism, the same unlimited sway, that *decree* does in the dominion of Calvinism.

The propriety of attributing to the will, such complete dominion over the destinies of man, may be fairly questioned. It appears to us much more rational, to conclude the soul, however undefinable and uncompounded, to be something which has a power within itself *to will, think, and act freely*, under the persuasive influence of those motives with which the Creator has surrounded it ; and that this *thinking, willing, and active* something, when objects are presented to its consideration, has a power to select at pleasure, whichever it chooses. However *dark, or weak*, it may have become in consequence of original depravity, and whatever aversion it may have to spiritual things naturally,

yet through the preventing grace of God, and the persuasive influence of those commanding motives which the gospel reveals, it may overcome that aversion, become enlightened, and be strong through the Lord Jesus Christ. If this is a correct view of the subject, and its correctness seems confirmed by the experience and observation of mankind, the soul has power, when an object of choice is presented to the understanding, to act in conformity, or contrary to its previous inclination; and this choice is neither directed, nor prevented by a resistless excitement of Almighty God; nor yet determined by the restraining influence of a *moral inability*: but is an exercise of that active power with which all rational beings are endowed.—The overcoming this native *disinclination* to good, through the gracious and *resistible* operation of divine agency, and the right use of our active powers, constitutes what, in the language of the gospel, is called *the cross*, which every man is required to *take up* in order to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus: otherwise no man bears any cross at all; for certainly there can be no cross in following our *inclination* merely.

In respect to the *will*, it seems to be the result of deliberation, unless we suppose that previous act of the mind, by which a person resolves to deliberate whenever a subject of deliberation is presented to the mind, is the first existence of the will. For instance; suppose a man were requested to make a donation to some charitable institution; the first volition of the mind is to consider whether it be consistent for him to comply with the requisition; and after deliberating, he forms his determination, which determination he communicates to the solicitor by saying, *I will*, or *I will not*. Until he had deliberated, he had no *will* at all respecting giving or withholding, nor any will in re-

ference to that particular object. Now, it would sound extremely awkward for this man, after having deliberated upon this subject, to say, my *will* *wills* to give, or my *will* *wills* to withhold. But if he were to accommodate his language to that theory which makes the will the governing faculty of the soul, he would say, my *will* must be consulted; and if it consent, he should say, my *will* determines to do thus and so, instead of saying, *I* determine. This phraseology, however, has never been adopted by any people, although the theory on which it is obviously founded, has been admitted both by philosophers and divines.

With all deference, therefore, to those who have adopted the phraseology, I consider it extremely improper to say *The will is a self determining principle of the soul*; because it supposes a sort of independent power invested in a particular faculty of the soul, which domineers over the whole man, laying all his powers prostrate before the whimsical dictates of the will; whereas the will has no positive existence, in reference to a particular subject, until the man resolves, deliberates, and determines; and this operation of the soul is its will.— Hence the universal language of mankind, *I will* and *I will not*, involves the principle for which we contend, namely, that man is master of himself. When a subject is submitted to him for investigation, he first wills to deliberate, and communicates the result of his deliberation by saying *I will*, or *I will not*.

Neither is a man under the necessity of following the dictates of his judgment; but he possesses an intrinsic energy by which he may sever the connexion between his judgment and will, and act in direct opposition to the dictates of his judgment; otherwise he is not justly condemnable: for if a man act at all times agreeable to the decisions of

his judgment, and that by a necessary connexion existing between the judgment and the determinations of his mind, how can he be justly condemned for any of his actions? How many there are, who, amid all the surrounding evidences of God's love, the certain excellence of Christianity, the dreadful consequences of disobedience to its sacred injunctions, and the happy effects of heartily embracing its doctrines and precepts, *deliberately* close their eyes upon all this glare of divine light, and obstinately pursue, in direct opposition to their enlightened judgments, the paths of folly and vice. And has not our divine Lord recognized this sentiment in those well known words, 'This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.' And did he not also reprove the Pharisees for suffering their pride and ambition to bribe their better informed judgments, in the following words? 'If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.'—To say therefore, that a man is under either a physical or moral necessity of following the last dictate of his judgment, is as contrary to sacred scripture as it is to sound philosophy.

The holy scriptures most evidently presuppose the principle for which we now contend. God addresses himself to man, and not to a particular faculty denominated the *will*. And after having presented the grand and awfully interesting subjects of happiness and misery, heaven and hell, time and eternity, balancing the respective claims of each, God calls upon man to choose which he will. 'Turn ye from your evil ways; for why WILL YE die?' 'I have set life and death before you, therefore choose ye.' He does not say, Let your *will* choose. 'YE WILL not come unto me, that YE might have life.' He does not say your *will* will

not let you come ; but *ye will not*—‘ *Ye will* not suffer yourselves to be influenced, by my warnings and invitations, to forsake your sinful prejudices, and come unto me that *ye might have life.*’ In these instances, we perceive the language of inspiration accommodating itself to the theory for which we contend ; namely, that the *will* is the whole man in *operation*, either for or against the truth. How strange would it sound, were it said, *ye would have come to me, but your will would not let you.* But we find no such language in the holy scriptures.

From this scriptural and rational view of the subject under consideration, we perceive the manifest absurdity of the Hopkinsian speculations concerning a *moral inability*, consisting altogether in the perversity of the will, as if that turned the scale in every thing. This unintelligible something, which they sometimes denominate the will, and sometimes a *moral inability*, occupies, as before observed, in their system, precisely the same place, and performs the same functions, which *fate* did in heathenism, and as *decree* does in Calvinism ; and appears to have been invented for the purpose of obviating the Arminian objection to the doctrine of Calvinistic reprobation, respecting the injustice of consigning those reprobates to hell for not doing what they never had any power to do. Hence, say the advocates of this phantasm, men have *natural power* to counteract the influence of God’s decree, but never do it, because they have no *moral power* ; and when you ask them to explain what they mean by this moral power, they tell you it is the *will*—reprobates and devils might love God if they *would*, but they *will not*. But the fact is, a man has no will respecting a particular subject, until that subject is presented to his mind ; and then he may will to consider upon it or not ; and finally,

will to accept or reject, according to his own choice.

Thus, when God calls upon sinners to repent, the subject of Christianity presenting itself to their minds in all its bearings, they deliberate upon it, if they act understandingly, whether it be best to comply with the call or not; and if they conclude it best to comply, their language is, *We will—We will return unto the Lord, we will believe in Jesus Christ*; they do not say, *Our will resolves we shall repent, and therefore we must yield a compliance to its lordly dictates.* However absurd such language may appear, it is but the legitimate offspring of this mother of inconsistency, that the will is a constituent faculty of the soul, exercising a lordly influence over the whole man. The moment we accommodate our phraseology to the theory we are opposing, respecting the will possessing a preponderating influence over the man, leading him captive to its capricious humour, we see its manifest inconsistency. All those forms of speech, found in the sacred scripture, in moral writers, and in our verbal communications with each other, justify the doctrine for which we plead, that the will is the effect, or result of deliberation, or that which is induced by the presentation of any query or subject, concerning which the mind resolves to deliberate. The first existence, then, of the will in reference to any particular subject, is the first act of the mind respecting that subject—I say in reference to any *particular subject*; because the mind is always active—always *willing* or *nilling* respecting something.

Hence the immaterial spirit of man, is an undefinable something invested by its Creator with sovereign authority (subordinate, however, to the wise and beneficent government of God) over itself; and which thinks, deliberates and acts freely. Of

this every man may be conscious if he attend to what passes in his own breast—and the best proof of man is man himself—If he will calmly attend to what passes in his own mind, though he cannot explain *how*, nor assign the reasons *wherefore*, he will find such self-evident demonstrations of his own dominion over himself, as shall completely nullify all the erroneous conclusions drawn from theories which have been adopted to support a favourite system. Every man is conscious of such a principal of action as involves responsibility ; and his deliberate judgment tells him that he cannot be responsible for actions which are induced by necessity ; but if he be bound by an invincible *moral inability*, *will*, *disposition*, or *inclination*, or whatever other name may be given to the controlling power, to only one line of conduct, however pleasant it may be to him, neither justice nor goodness can assign any reason why he should be condemned. I say however *pleasant* it may be to him ; for if the *disposition* to choose be entirely directed by an Almighty predisposing cause, inducing the sinner either by a secret operation upon his heart, or by the presentation of external motives, to choose as he does, although it may be said that he does as he *pleases*, it alters not the state of the case ; because, according to our opponents, all those things came to pass only in consequence of the exciting agency of God upon his heart. These things being considered, pray tell us, ye who have studied this system, how the Hopkinsian theory of natural ability, and moral inability will obviate the Arminian objection against Calvinistic reprobation ; or rescue the justice of God from the impeachment of cruelty, in the condemnation of the reprobates ? That doctrine says, that the natural ability and moral inability, all the desires of the heart, internal and external motives, all the actions of the life,

whether righteous or wicked, are according to God's original decree, and are now produced by the efficient hand of God. Now if this be so, of what use is a natural ability, or a moral inability. Can either the strength of the one, or the feebleness of the other, counteract the immutable decree of heaven, or resist the irresistible influence of the universal divine efficiency? So little do these subtle refinements respecting natural and moral ability, benefit the system they are designed to support.

Upon the whole, therefore, I conclude, that it is not the "words which I have used as making a true representation of their sentiments, which seem to have such a strange clashing with each other, that the inattentive reader would be led to imagine, that none but men more fit for a mad house, than to be Christian teachers, could ever believe and propagate such self-contradictory doctrines," (p. 135.) but it is that *doctrine* of my antagonist that has such a *strange clashing*, that the *attentive* reader must perceive that none but those who are extremely puzzled to support a favourite theory, would ever attempt to vindicate. Of this I believe every impartial observer must be convinced who attentively weighs the preceding observations. To suppose that men have natural power to love God with all the heart without grace, and without any disposition, is one of the incredible paradoxes reserved for the perfecting of modern divinity; and it so *clashes* with the *essential doctrines of the reformation*, with the word of the living God, and is so abhorrent to the dictates of common sense, that I believe it would be difficult to persuade even a *mad-man*, much less a *sober man*, to believe it. But when we are further told that these men, who were unconditionally reprobated to eternal burnings by an immutable decree of God, have *natural* power without any *disposition*, to break that decree, regenerate

themselves, and be prepared for heaven, we candidly think such absurd notions are more fit for a "mad-house" than for a Christian temple: and that it is high time for the teachers of such "clashing" doctrines to put themselves into the school of sober reason, until they are prepared for the higher branches of scriptural divinity, which exhibits and illustrates the harmonious doctrines of Jesus Christ. They will then learn to proclaim a consistent scheme of divine doctrines, which harmonizes all the divine attributes, presents the Saviour of sinners in the transcendent glories of his character as having atoned for the sin of the world; and also opens a door of mercy to all men, by showing the efficacy of the Holy Spirit, who comes to enlighten the dark minds of sinners, to restrain their evil dispositions, and to enable them to overcome the natural or moral aversion of their hearts, come to Christ and live. Likewise, to exhibit an impartial God, eternally existing in the sacred Unity of Trinity, the plenitude of whose uncreated goodness, is manifested in granting unto all men a probationary state. Yes, they would then unfold the wonderful design of Creating, Redeeming, Pardonning, and Sanctifying love, so eminently exemplified in the grand system of revelation. Guided by this ray of divine light, the mind is enraptured at the view of the unbounded wisdom, the untarnished justice, the unfathomable love, and the impartial goodness of the Triune God, in devising, executing, and revealing the superexcellent and comprehensive system of redemption and salvation. With hearts imbued with this love, with what supreme delight does the tongue proclaim the wonders of redeeming grace! Embracing all mankind in the arms of love, with what sincerity, faith, and unutterable delight may we invite sinners to come to Christ and live. Standing upon this eminence, raised by the dying groans of

Jesus Christ, with what holy rapture do we look up to the Throne of God, while we behold the impartial God, demonstrating his love to all the human family ; and with what commisseration do we look down upon our lost world, while we call upon them to accept of eternal life. While the heart swells with gratitude to our adored God, from this delightful view of his sacred character, it is drawn forth with the tenderest sympathy toward the human race. Being authorized from this scriptural representation of the divine economy, we joyfully proclaim in the ears of our fellow men, the unsearchable riches of Christ—assuring them upon the most indubitable testimony, that they all have been comprehended in the grand scheme of redemption.

On the other hand—With what truth, with what justice, may we denounce the penalties of God's righteous law against its bold violaters. To such we may say : The law you have unjustly violated : The gospel you have despised : Jesus Christ who died for you, you have neglected : The Holy Spirit you have grieved : In a word, you have slighted, abused, and finally rejected that goodness which the Holy God had mercifully offered unto you. Rejecting the sincere offers of life and salvation you have *treasured up to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.* Your condemnation, therefore, originates necessarily, from the nature of your own conduct, from your own voluntary rejection of eternal life.

These are the awfully interesting truths with which Christianity gently assails mankind, and by which it powerfully recommends itself to *every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

And do we perceive any *strange clashing* among these truths ? Do we not perceive them all concentrating in the perfections of God ; and from thence branching out in various directions; amplifying,

and suiting themselves to the various relations, conditions, and characters of men? How diminutive does poor, fallen, and guilty man appear, while this glare of divine light shines upon him! And how transcendently glorious does the Triune God appear, while the mind views Him, through the medium of these sublime, and interesting truths. Not the smallest spot of eternal hatred to one part of the human family, is beheld to darken the divinely glorious character of Jehovah—Not a cloud of reprobating wrath is seen hovering in the luminous atmosphere of gospel truth—until we see them rising from the stagnant pool of human corruption and perversity. All around the divine throne, on which sits the God of power, justice, and goodness, encircled with the bright rays of universal love, we behold, when enlightened by the Sun of truth, evident signs of *good will* to the degraded, suffering, and miserable sons of men: while, in this dark valley of human nature, we see evident tokens of depravity, wrath, variance, and opposition to God and goodness. We see, indeed, the wretched sons of men, madly pursuing their race in folly and wickedness, shutting their ears against the calls of divine mercy, and persisting, in spite of all the signals of coming indignation, in the high road to hell! At this dismal sight, the heart of the philanthropist, filled with godly sorrow, cries out, *Is there no help?* He looks up, and beholds a God—a Saviour—whose impartial love led him to die for those sinners. No sooner does this truth fasten upon the understanding, than the lover of human souls, announces it unto these perishing sinners; urging them by all that is dear to themselves, by the love of God, by the dying groans of Jesus Christ, not madly to rush on to their own destruction, but to return unto God and live.

Armed with these truths, and surrounded by this

flood of divine light, the minister of the Lord Jesus, may boldly step forth in the name of his Master, unfolding to a lost world, the sovereign remedy provided for their diseased souls, and the willingness of Almighty God to apply it to them. Now, we think, that all who act under the influence of these harmonious truths of God, will perceive sufficient reason to believe that all men, during their probationary state, have sufficient natural and moral power to repent of their sins, and to believe in Jesus Christ *with a heart unto righteousness.*

The preceding doctrines, and the arguments used in their defence, are submitted to the candid reader with all that confidence which a conscientious regard to truth, and a just abhorrence of error, are calculated to inspire. If the system of doctrines we have espoused is founded on the immovable basis of truth, as we apprehend it is, it cannot be shaken by the arts of sophistry, nor rendered suspicious by a patient, scriptural, and minute investigation. Truth looses none of its lustre, nor suffers in its intrinsic value, for passing through the alembic of a close, liberal, and candid criticism. It may, indeed, be shaded by the imperfect *manner* in which it is exhibited, and the inefficient means employed in its defence. It is hoped, however; that the lover of truth will be disposed to make a reasonable allowance for any incidental errors which may have incorporated themselves with the execution of the present work, and let them have an apology in a consciousness of his own fallibility. The author pretends not to infallibility, nor to immediate inspiration. All he professes is, a sincere love of truth, and an ardent desire to perceive and follow its attractive influence wherever it may lead. If any of its native excellences are obscured by the imperfect medium through which they are exhibited, or its lovely attire concealed by an unskilful

hand, the reader is requested to have recourse to a more perfect mirror, the word of the living God; and its divine glories will so pervade his soul, as to convince him that God, the sacred Author of truth, *Is loving to every man, and that his tender mercies are over all his works.*

But he is requested, for his own sake, to divest himself of prejudice, and to read without partiality. Not imitate those whose comprehensive minds see every thing with infallible clearness without a painful thought; and, as if the umpire of correct decision were committed to them, can decide upon the merits of any question without a moment's reflection. Such readers, which we ought not to be solicitous to please, nor fearful to offend, will turn over an hundred pages in sullen suspense, unless they can discover some defect with which they can gratify their petulant disposition. Perhaps, however, at some *future* period, a knowledge of their own fallibility may dictate an apology for the unavoidable frailties of human kind. But while the hasty decisions of these superficial thinkers, expose their own vanity, and consign them to merited contempt, the judicious remarks and liberal criticisms of the conscientious and the candid, always add, not only to the correctness of any work, but also to the stock of useful information.

The friendly remarks of such enlightened minds, are like the pruning knife in the hands of a skilful gardener—they serve to lop off the useless twigs, and trim the tree of truth of any burdensome branches of error, which human weakness may have engrafted upon it. Knowing how to separate the precious from the vile, whenever they perceive the truth, they will embrace it for its own sake, however opposite to their preconceived opinions. And, it is presumed that when such persons read the following solemn words of Almighty God, ‘As I live, saith

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the LORD, I have NO PLEASURE in the death of the wicked,\* they will not hesitate to declare that the doctrine which saith *all things are according to God's pleasure*, must be radically defective.

May the time speedily come when all such erroneous systems shall be exposed by the radiant beams of eternal truth, and the perspicuous doctrines of the glorious gospel of God our Saviour, be universally believed, experienced, and exemplified in practical life. Amen.

FINIS.

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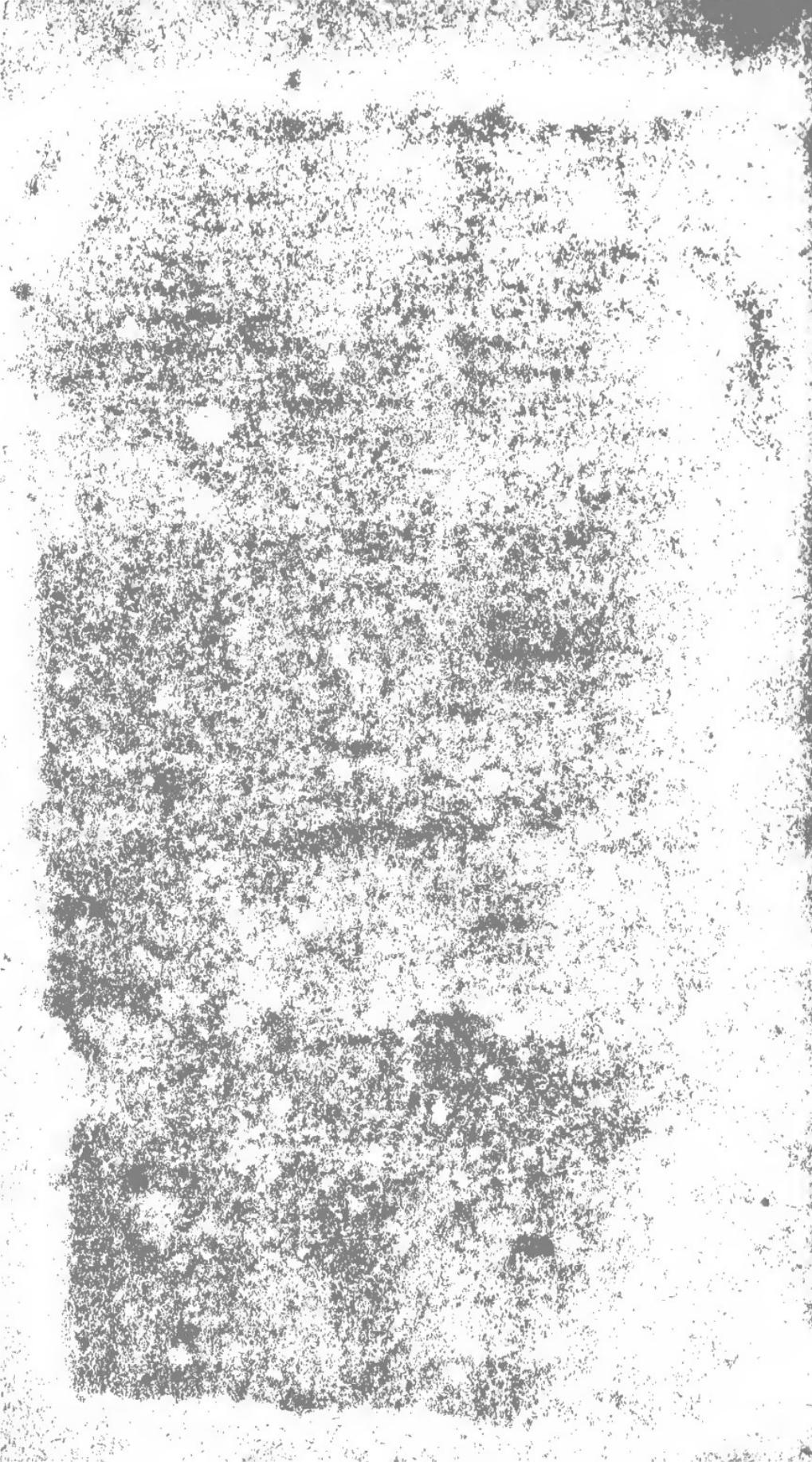
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### ERRATTA.

In the title page for viii. read vii.

Page 14 line 16 from bottom, for it into, read in.

- 19 — Note read Acts xiii. 48. instead of 43..
- 130 — 21 from bottom, note, read were, instead of was.
- — 12 from top, note for this, read the.
- 147 — 14 from top, after the word go, put a comma in- instead of a period.
- 198 — 7 from top, erase to.
- 258 — 5 from bottom, for on, read in.
- 259 — 9 from top, for Apostles, read Apostle.
- 311 — 6 from bottom, for bonafide, read bona-fide.
- 317 — 10 from top, for in, read of.

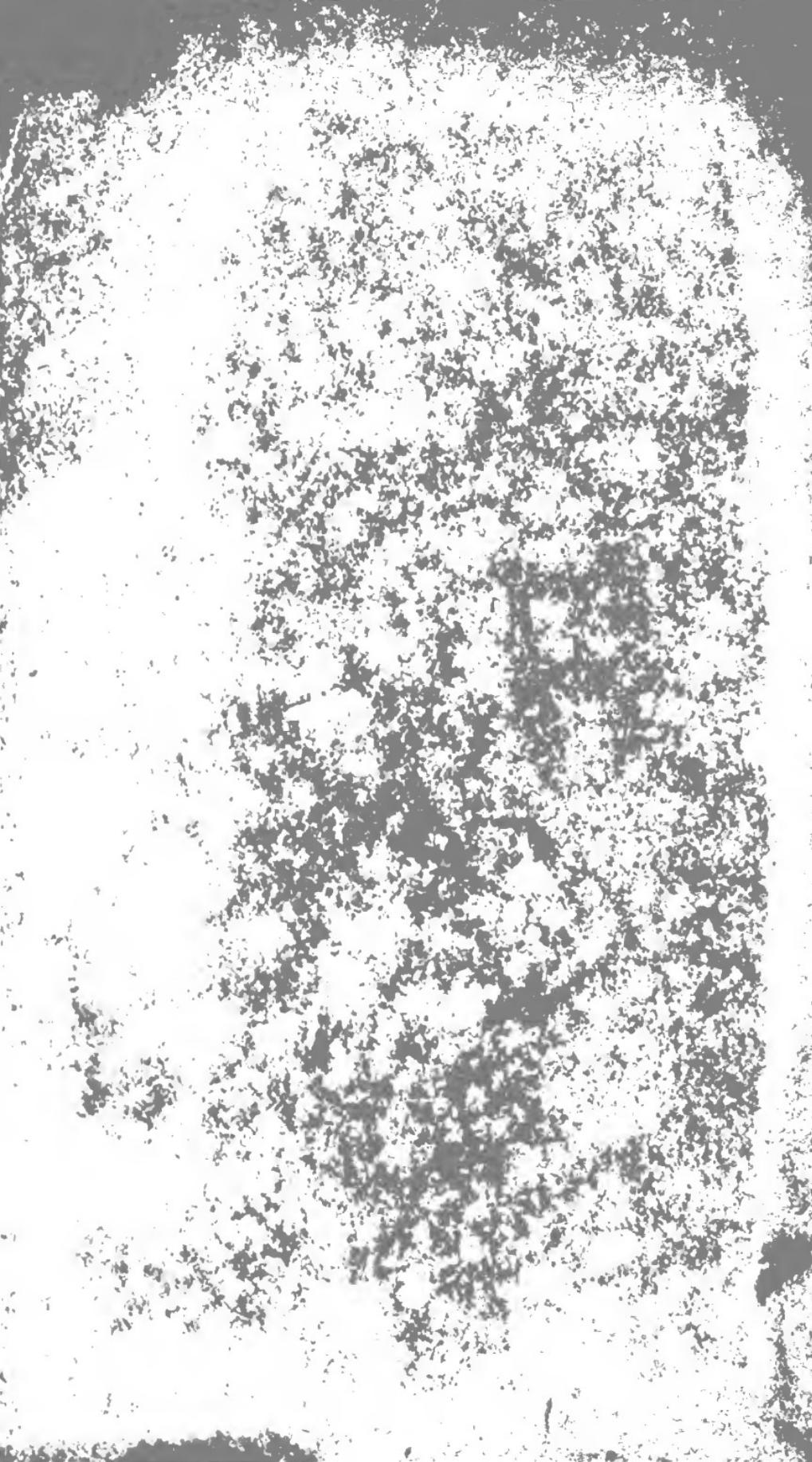








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